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ANTI-BABEL



WILLIAM HENRY BISHOP

The New York Public Library

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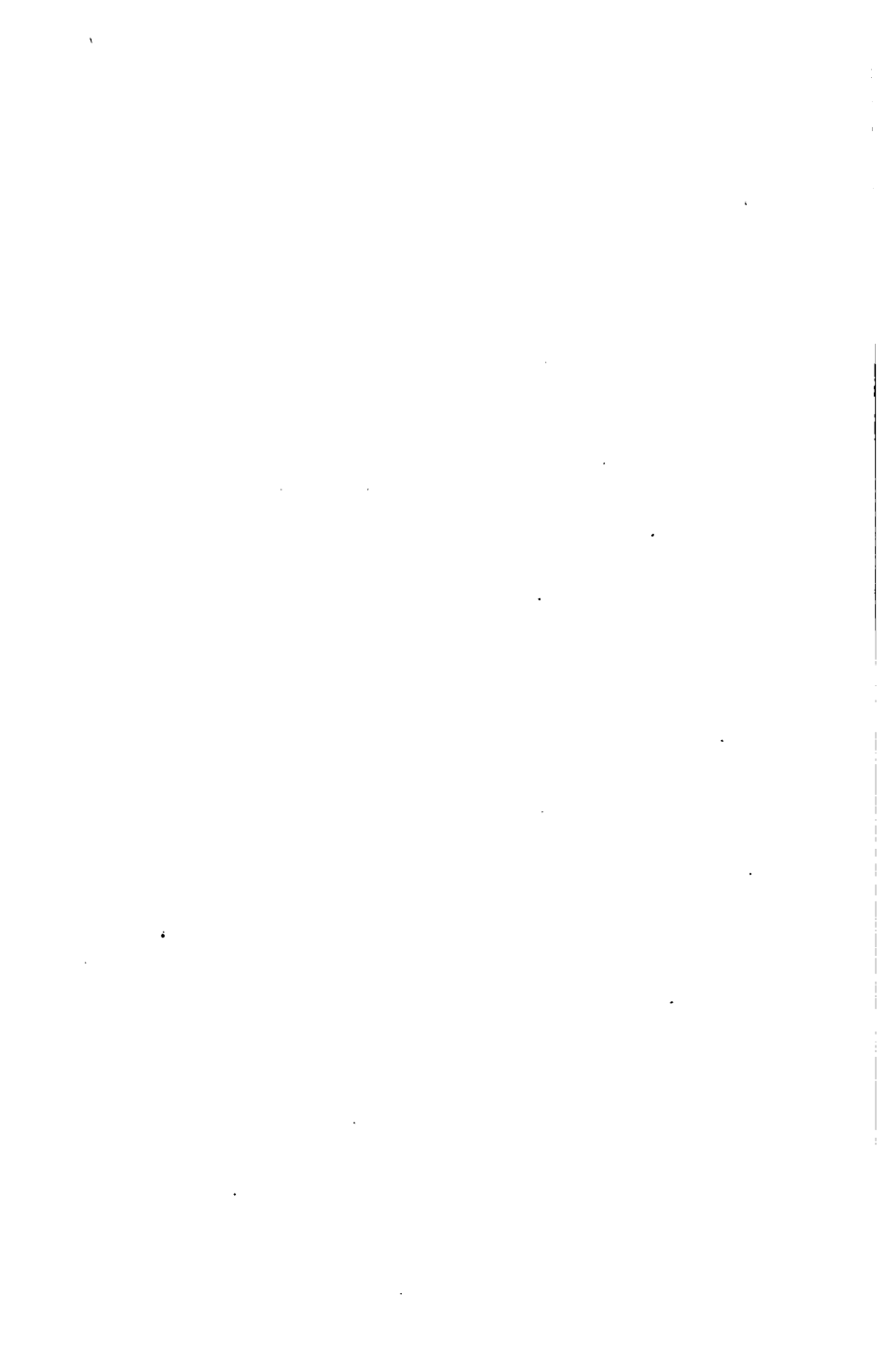
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12 mo. \$1.50

To

Mrs. Dave H. Morris
with best compliments of
William Henry Bishop
Brooklyn, Connecticut
May 10th 1927

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E. W.



ANTI-BABEL

And Other Such Doings



ANTI-BABEL

AND OTHER SUCH DOINGS

BY
WILLIAM HENRY BISHOP

AUTHOR OF
"THE HOUSE OF A MERCHANT PRINCE," "THE GOLDEN JUSTICE,"
"MEXICO AND HER LOST PROVINCES," "A POUND OF CURE,"
"A HOUSE-HUNTER IN EUROPE," ETC.



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HOMAGE OF THE AUTHOR
TO
PROFESSOR WILLIAM LYON PHELPS
OF YALE UNIVERSITY

Whose "Universal Language" is a far finer one than that herein lightly touched upon,—a universal interest in everything that is good and kindly and essentially human.

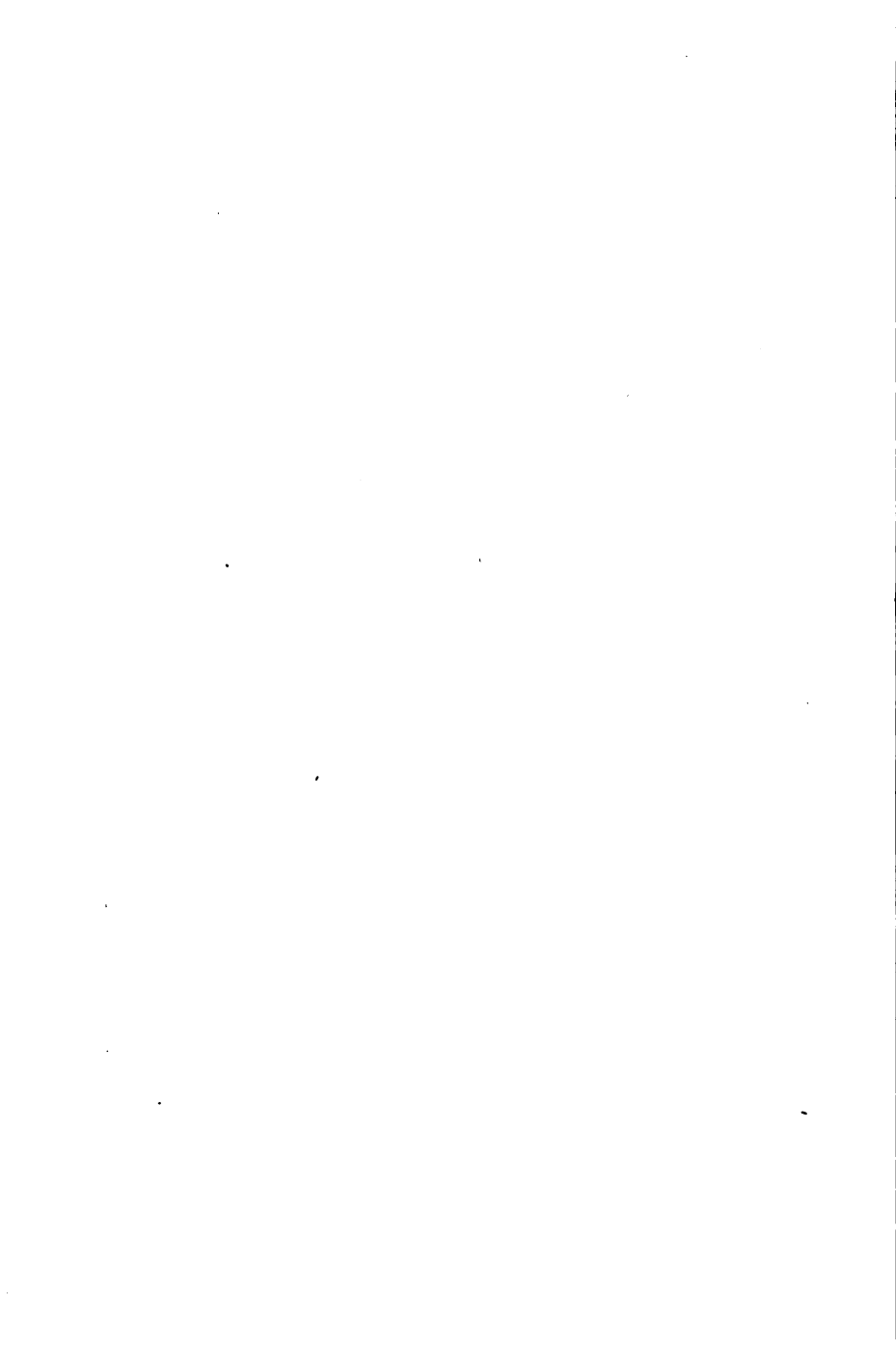


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“ANTI-BABEL”

OR

THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

As there is scarcely a living soul who did not attend the Chicago Exposition of 1892, the most charming as well as the most individual and strenuous of all Expositions, you will all remember of course how the great fountains of the central terrace would send now to this side, now to that, as swayed by the wind, a drenching spray, from which people would flee in dire confusion.

Two persons, saving themselves in a panic from such sudden deluge, almost ran into each other's arms. One was a rusty-looking old gentleman in a frock coat and a high hat; and the other was a young, or youngish woman of plain but prepossessing aspect, in a shirt-waist and a skirt of different shades of brown, with a satchel for guide books slung over her shoulder.

“Why Uncle Pausanias!” exclaimed the young woman.

“Why Mary!” exclaimed the old gentleman.

“I read about you in the paper this morning,” said the niece, who it appeared was named Mary Shaft. “I was just wondering if I should see you, and where and how. I did not know you were here.”

“You read about me in the paper?” responded the

elderly man, a characteristic air of abstraction beginning to give place to interest.

"Yes, in the—I don't remember which one; but I cut it out. I have the slip here. I was going to send it home. They will all be so interested and proud and delighted. And feeling in the satchel at her side she produced a newspaper extract and handed it to him. It read as follows:—

"Among the notable arrivals in town is Professor Pausanias Sandfog, of McCorkleville University. The professor comes to the Exposition to utilize for his remarkable language experiments, the vast variety of representatives of foreign nations now gathered here from all quarters of the earth. We believe we are correct in stating that Professor Sandfog's great plan for a universal language is just on the point of completion. Thus the World's Columbian Exhibition, which has been an influence of incalculable value in every other department of human affairs, will most fittingly be also the means of introducing to mankind a uniform method of speech. Some idea of the importance of Professor Sandfog's great discovery may be had by remembering the famous Leibnitz' estimate that the adoption of a universal language would be equivalent to adding a third to the duration of human life."

"Yes, that is correct or substantially correct," said the professor, with a complacent air, handing back the item. "How the newspapers do get hold of things!"

"A universal language—how grand! how lovely!

how marvellous! And to think that a member of our own family should be the first to invent it!"

"Do not fall into error; mine is not the first of such languages; it is simply the best."

"Oh, indeed?" stammered his niece, quickly open to correction, "I was not aware—I had not studied the subject."

"Yes, others should have their due credit. Philosophic minds for two hundred years past, including Leibnitz himself, have tried it. I have simply succeeded where others failed. I may say without vanity that I have settled one of the great problems of humanity. I do not wish to be egotistical, but I suppose I shall rank, in due time, as one of the chief benefactors of the race."

"Indeed you will, indeed you will, Uncle Pausanias," breathed Miss Shaft fervently.

"Note, too, that McCorkleville University will derive no small credit from this invention, which is one of those that thrill, electrify, strike with amazement."

"It must, it must."

With a large colored handkerchief the professor began to rub off the drops of fountain spray from his antiquated high hat. Changing the subject to a more human plane, he said abruptly, "Your Aunt Fiducia is riding round here somewhere in a wheel chair. I don't see a great deal of her; she's generally wheeling round; but if we could contrive to meet her, I know she'd be glad to see you. We will go and look her up."

"I really ought not to delay now. You see I am not master of all my own time. I came here having charge

of a young girl—the daughter of one of my school trustees—she has had considerable trouble lately and needs to be amused.”

“Indeed? What seems to be the matter with her?”

“It was a broken engagement principally. She had to break it off on account of information she got about the young man; she found him out to be a scapegrace without any sense of responsibility; and, as she had believed in him, she took it pretty hard. I tell you this quite confidentially, Uncle Pausanias— There! there she is, the one over by the balustrade—in the blue yachting suit. She’s chatting with some friends she met from our town, and waiting for me.”

“Ah, um, yes, I see. She is quite young, as you say.”

“And pretty too, don’t you think so—even with her sad look?”

But her hearer ignored the question together with further attention to the subject, and returned to his own.

“I’d been wondering, Mary,” said he, “if you could not give me an hour or two a day in this business of mine? You would be just the one. You understand stenography, and for a short time I need a person like you on whose discretion I could absolutely rely.”

“I should just love to if Leontine, my protégée, could spare me, but I do not suppose she could. I can ask her, though.—But I am just dying to hear about the Universal Language; do give me a little account of it.”

“I call it ‘Anti-Babel,’” said he, and paused with pride to observe the effect.

"'Anti-Babel.'" Miss Mary Shaft paused also, in reflection, then clapped her gloved hands. "What an excellent name! It shows so clearly the range and scope of the undertaking. The more I think of it the better I like it."

"It ~~is~~ rather good." My system intends to undo the great confusion of tongues that took place at the tower of Babel, in the land of Shinar—which confusion was wrought by some mistake, I am persuaded, that the exegetists will yet explain to us."

"Is it anything like Volapük? I recollect now I once looked over a primer of that universal language, and I found it dreadful."

"Volapük was self-condemned by its harshness," responded Professor Sandfog, severely. "The coming language must be melodious. Nor must it have a bias from the German or any other nationality. English, for instance, is spoken by a hundred and twenty million people or so. Some folks, therefore, have proposed that English should be modified and used as a universal speech. Others have proposed the Chinese or the Malay, both of which also have a very wide dissemination."

"Oh, if it could only be English!" sighed Mary.

"Such ideas are all stuff and nonsense." He looked at her in some surprise. "Local pride and jealousy will always prevent any consummation of that kind. Every man thinks his own language better than every other man's, and he is not going to give it up in favor of anybody else's. No merely *national* language, therefore, will ever prevail over the others."

"No, of course not; no, indeed."

"What might we suppose to be the next alternative? The introduction of a purely artificial speech. But that will meet with even less favor still. Men will never accept a merely mechanical invention, made of wholly new cloth; they will have nothing to do with a purely artificial product, which would have no history, derivations, or roots of its own."

"What, then, will they accept, Uncle Pausanias? I thought—I—it seems a very puzzling problem."

"Accept? Why, 'Anti-Babel,' of course. The beauty of my system is that it avoids all national differences and jealousies; or rather, it wins over to itself the very sentiment on which they are based, and makes that a part of its strength."

"Do you think a specimen of your language would be too difficult for me to understand?" appealed his niece, ingratiatingly.

"Difficult? Nonsense! Like all great inventions, it is extremely simple. That is why I have such absolute confidence in it."

"I am so glad it is not too hard. That would make people slow in learning it."

"Hard? It is simplicity itself. I cannot give you any actual example of the words as yet; but I'll explain it to you."

"O, please do."

"See here; it is like this: I assemble in a hall persons representing the different languages of the world. I signify a certain word, let us say 'bread.' At a signal they are all to speak that word together, each in his

own tongue. I take down the resultant. That resultant will be the word in my universal language."

"Oh—oh, yes"—but somewhat hesitatingly, for Mary Shaft was a person of no great range of imagination. "I should say that was very good." She did not yet see whither all this would lead.

"Very good? Why, it's immense; it's stupendous, hitherto unheard of. Are you quite sure you understand it?"

"Let me see if I do. You get the crowd of foreigners together. They all shout the same word in chorus, the Frenchman in French, the Russian in Russian, the Turk in Turkish, and so forth, and you collect the resulting sound——"

"Yes—in a phonograph."

"It will be like composite photographs—of words. The various sounds overlap, just as the pictures do, and you get but a single impression."

"Not a bad comparison. I see you catch the idea."

"But the objection to composite photographs is a blurred look, a lack of sharpness."

"That will not be considered an objection in *words*. See the mellifluous softness that Anti-Babel must have; it will be smoother than Italian; I expect it to be a great favorite with musicians. On the other hand, since it will contain all the consonants, all the masculine elements in language, also, it cannot be lacking in strength."

"I must say it's a wonderful idea, Uncle Pausanias; I'm getting very enthusiastic about it. And it's so in keeping with this marvelous Exposition!"

"You can understand that words composed in that way will be full of life and vitality, and no mere bloodless product. Each will contain the sap and essence of all its predecessors. And there is no reason for rivalry or jealousy, you see, for no nation is excluded; each one has its full part in the result.

"I should think you would need some quieter place for your studies, uncle. This bustling Chicago must be rather confusing," said Mary.

"Do not lose sight of the chief consideration that brings me here. McCorkleville was very well while I was preparing the preliminaries, but here alone I could find the aggregation of strange peoples who furnish the material for my researches. An international exposition is the one place where such an experiment as mine can be successfully made. Mere traveling in foreign countries would not do; for, passing from one to another, you would not have the different kinds of people all together, as is necessary. I wanted very much to go to the last Paris Exposition, in '89; but Mrs. Sandfog and the children—well, I was not able to accomplish it."

"You are just too mean!" said his niece, reprovingly. "When I was at McCorkleville last you never said a thing to me about this."

"The time was not ripe to disclose my secret then. Now that I have actually begun it is different.—But," he broke off, "it is just as well I did not go to Paris in '89; for, not knowing French or other modern languages, the difficulties of putting the matter through

in such unfamiliar surroundings would have been too great."

"No modern languages? But I should think a person would have to be posted in all conceivable languages to make a success of such a scheme."

"No, no; not necessarily," he replied, unruffled. "I have always been occupied with mathematical matters, and have not had the time for that. The important thing is the shaping plan, the directing mind. Remark that mere attention to detail often detracts from success in the main issue."

"Oh—oh, yes," she commented, with but the vaguest idea of what he meant.

While they were talking, some groups or single figures of strangely dressed foreigners would wander by, temporarily strayed from that singular storehouse of nations, the Midway Plaisance. Once there passed, together, a trio of Annamites, a couple of Druse women of Mount Lebanon, mysteriously veiled, and a Mexican in short jacket and sombrero, ornate with silver buttons and braid.

"You see the kind of material I have to choose from," the professor said complacently.

"And how do you manage to deal with them?"

"I have a skilled agent collecting for me examples of the various nationalities I need. He does it even better than I could myself. He is as bright and active a young fellow as I ever saw. Mr. Murkle, James K. Murkle, his name is. I fell in with him by a happy accident, and he has been invaluable to me. I have an engagement with him shortly," consulting his watch. "He was to

report on some types that are still missing. And then then there is another most important matter under consideration, the finding of a proper hall for holding our meetings."

"But can you expect to find here examples of *all* the nations in the world? And if you do not have them all, how can the results you obtain be correct?"

"Such fullness is not necessary for the present. I hold that substantial correctness can be secured by getting delegates from all the principal districts of Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America, and Oceanica, taking care that no important spot is omitted. The Indo-European race may be somewhat disproportionately represented in numbers, but it is the one to which the most civilized nations, both of ancient and modern times, have belonged, and consequently has had the chief influence upon the destinies of mankind. Fortunately, delegates from that stock are the easiest of all to obtain."

"The immensity of all this almost takes one's breath away."

"It does, it does," assented the professor with warm conviction, "of course, I am working now under considerable disadvantages; but some day great capitalists, governments themselves, will take this matter up, liberal appropriations will be made. For instance, a vast hall should be built, with a funnel shaped end or roof in which all the sounds produced within could be properly collected. In that way all the finer shadings will be reached, ending in complete perfection."

"I am afraid I shall have to be going, Uncle; I see Leontine looking for me."

But the young woman spoken of as "Leontine," the protégée, now came over and joined them. She carried a catalogue in her hand, the jacket of her yachting-suit over her arm; and she raised her large, fine eyes to the professor's face for a moment with a sad, pensive air.

"I will let you know as soon as the time of our meetings is settled, and I trust your engagements will not conflict with your taking part in some of them," said Professor Sandfog, to his niece, on leaving.

But now Aunt Fiducia, Mrs. Sandfog, rolled up in her wheel-chair, and detained them further; at least, she detained the niece. She was a very gossip person, and soon drew from her an account of the broken engagement of Leontine, who again leaned pensively on the balustrades, studying the Turner and Claude Lorrain Grecian palace effects around the grand piece of water.

Mary Shaft said that Leontine Hammel, of Brooklyn, while a member of a sketching class in Brittany, had allowed herself to become engaged to a young scapegrace named Eliot Shorter; and her family had gone over from America, broken off the imprudent match, and had just brought her home.

"One of the reckless things they learned about him," said she, "was that he divided his property up into three parts, and spent one part each year. He had got it into his head somehow that he had but three years to live. At the end of the time he was as well as ever, but penniless and without any way of making a living. It was about then he got engaged.

"Leontine did quite right to drop him," declared Aunt Fiducia.

"Oh, it was not on account of the money," protested Miss Shaft loyal to her charge. "She is a sweet, conscientious, accomplished girl, and, in spite of this, a very intelligent one too. But he was impossible."

When Professor Sandfog was left to himself he was presently joined by his agent or chief assistant, James K. Murkle. This was a young man of gentlemanly appearance, though shabbily dressed, and he accosted his patron with an easy, confident air.

"Seen the notice in the morning paper, Professor?"

"Yes; my niece called my attention to it a short time ago. I had missed it myself."

"I got that put in. I ran across a reporter looking for items, and I filled him up with this discovery of yours. If you say so, I will manage to make things hum, in the press, so that when you get back to McCorkleville the folks will come out to meet you with brass bands and a display of fireworks."

"We had better wait a little for results. I do not find that necessary just at present."

"Just as you say, professor."

"And now, what have you to report in the matter of a hall?"

"Only this: that there does not seem to be a foot of space for us either within the Exposition grounds or, near by, without. They can't take us in at the Parisian Glass Works, or the Ice Railway, or the Diving-bell Exhibit; and the vacant sculpture studio I was hop-

ing to get was snapped up by another party so quick that I never had even a ghost of a chance for it."

"Then it seems we shall have to go down town, to some such place as the Music Hall."

"Corner of Randolph and State? No; that's too far away for the folks to go. And we couldn't have it even if it wasn't; it is occupied by the Keeley Convention."

"Keeley the inventor of the motor? Has he——?"

"No; he wouldn't want to hold a convention all by himself. It's the other kind, the 'gold cure,' the——er——" And he crooked his elbow expressively, with thumb pointing toward mouth.

"But we must have *some* place," exclaimed the professor, desperately. "The partitions are too thin in my hotel. Besides Mrs. Sandfog. Well, we can't hold our sessions in language construction out of doors, can we?"

"I was going on to say that we could have the Beauty Show hall if we could use it very early in the morning."

"The Beauty Show hall? Ah, yes; I recollect the place—on the Midway Plaisance. I think they call it the International Dress and Costume Company."

"The same. Big, fine building; appropriate place, too; flags of all nations flying all over it. The parties we bring in there will feel quite at home."

"The work is of a kind to ennoble any place in which it might be held," said the professor, after some little hesitation. "And the—the present occupants?"

"As we've got to start in as early as eight o'clock in the morning, or not at all, they will be sleeping

off their victories of the day before, and getting ready to paralyze the public again. They won't be there.—The Swiss girl, though, I'd like to have her come; she's a first-class good-looker, a real beauty, and no mistake."

"We cannot accept anybody on that basis," rejoined his employer, coldly.

"Well, good looks ought not to be anything against 'em if they've got all the rest. 'Frida' speaks the dialect of the Engadine; I've heard that lingo myself, and know it's genuine. They say it's a kind of broken down Latin. Take 'Marie,' again, for an example, that I've engaged from the French bakery. I consider her one of the best delegates we're going to have, and yet she's a regular peach. Those two will brighten up the whole place like the Blazing Sun Stove-polish."

"You may be right; but, as far as possible, I think it would be wise to make our selections from the masculine rather than the feminine gender."

"The masculine gender is going to preponderate at least eighty per cent., professor; don't be uneasy about that. My latest is the big halberdier who keeps guard in front of the Old Vienna café. I've engaged him to come, halberd and all, to add tone to the thing. He represents High German. Low German will be represented by a Mecklenburger from a North Side brewery. I have a Dutchman from Holland, and another from Surinam to give the colonial accent."

The professor nodded his head approvingly.

"Say, my Fiji is a corker; I've got a couple of daisy Italians; and my Eskimo is 'way out of sight—I

got him from the Eskimo village, down by the South Park station. There's more than fifty of them, with dogs, sledges, canoes, spears, and seal blubber complete. You ought to stop in and take a look at 'em, if you haven't done so already."

"And a Patagonian—what have you to report on that score? You have not forgotten that a Patagonian is absolutely necessary to the rounding out of my program?"

"Patagonians are scarce, and will probably come high. I have none yet; but don't be afraid; I'm bound to get you one, if hustling can do it."

"Should we not do well to enlist some members of the Parliament of Religions? I should like to have the advice of representative Brahmans, pundits, Greek archbishops, and Japanese high priests, in their several languages; they are men of education, and we could rely upon what they said. I have been thinking I could make their acquaintance and attend to that matter myself, leaving the others to you."

"Are you sure they wouldn't steal your invention?" suggested Mr. Murkle, craftily. "At any rate, they'd be sure to be uppish, and would want big pay. I doubt if they'd give out the pronunciation as natural-like, either, as the other kind. No; I can get you all the Japanese and Hindus and Africans you want at from twenty-five to fifty cents an hour, and they'll do the business as it ought to be done."

"Don't forget that if there is to be a lack of proportion anywhere, it should consist in getting more people from the center of Asia than elsewhere—As-

syrians, Persians, Armenians, and the like. As that was the parent spot of the human race, and where the tower of Babel was built, the dialects around there are probably nearer to the original speech of man than any others."

"They would have the Parisian accent, as it were, of the primeval lingo."

"How do the persons you engage like it, as far as they have got?"

"Oh, they like it immensely; I hold partial rehearsals with 'em, and they think it's great."

"Yes; they naturally would," assented the professor, contentedly. "That is because there is no favoritism anywhere about it. When so many different sounds come in conflict something has to give way; but they will have the judgment to see that it is 'the survival of the fittest,' in the truest sense of the term."

"I will report to you to-night at the Himalaya Hotel, and if everything goes right, we can begin the day after to-morrow."

"The sooner the better," responded Professor Sandfog.

Mr. James Murkle then turned briskly northward, along the shores of the lagoon. Traversing the subway that passed under Stony Island Avenue, he entered the Midway Plaisance, that famous strip of ground, devoted to the lighter distractions of the Exposition as contrasted with its serious business, that has been imitated in miniature by every bathing-beach and county fair in the country since. It was a great area of flimsy mosques, pagodas, medieval castles, and vil-

lages, all promising pleasure according to their hopes of gain, and keeping good their promises only up to the point where a long-suffering public would have stood no further imposition. The din of sounding brass and tinkling cymbals arose confusedly from it; banners and pennants kindled all the air above it with a flaming of bright colors, while the bazaars and their motley attendants repeated the same gay notes of bright color with their junketing below.

Murkle first accosted a fat, ill-shaved Turk, in front of a combination of mosque, theatre, and café that was called Constantinople Street.

"Eh, Kibob, how goes it?" called he,—so misnaming him from the alleged *kabab*, or Turkish sausage, which, with nougat and beverages, he sold over the counter.

"Your old sausage here is nothing but common Frankfurter, at twice the price," he continued; but at the same time he threw down a dime and helped himself to one of them. The vender, stolidly pocketing dime, made no reply.

"And your so-called 'Turkish drinks' are just the washings of some old lemonade-tub." But again he threw down a nickel, and paid for a glass of the pinkish liquid that stood ready at his hand, though he did not drink it. The gazelle eyes of the fat-faced Turk looked at him impassively.

"You've decided to come to my language-meeting, haven't you, Kibob?" he now demanded.

"I see 'bout dat," was the evasive reply.

"That's what you said before, but I've got to have it settled.—Is Johnny Hamed around?"

A younger man, who proved to be the Hamed in question, opened the curtains at the back and stepped forth. When the former question was put to him also, he replied:

"Boss say he don't let me off."

"Did you say that, Kibob?"

The master of the shop nodded to indicate that he did. Murkle thereupon entered into an extended argument with both, but when he left, it was by no means certain that either of these desired recruits was gained for his enterprise.

He met with better success among some Hindu jugglers in a tent not far distant. Two slim young Hindus, in white cotton, with white teeth and shining eyes,—Sarabiji Das and Sinda Ram they called themselves—fell in with his plan in the main, though they said they could not join in a rehearsal.

"You be on hand at eight in the morning, then, the day after to-morrow, if you don't get word to the contrary," he admonished them.—"Remember the system: we ask for some word in your language, like 'bread,' for instance, and you want to shout it out for all you're worth."

"We got no 'bread' in Hindu language—only kind cake or cracker-like," objected Sinda Ram, conscientiously.

"Well, sing that out, then; it doesn't make any difference what bake it is, only don't be backward about it."

He addressed himself next to a dark maid of Tunis, who, holding forth at the door, was trying to draw audi-

ences into the Tunisian palace, where various dances were to be seen.

"Some parties wanted me to see you about joining a language-company we're getting up, Lola," he began, with easy impertinence.

"My name to me not Lola," she interrupted crabbedly.

"What is it, then?"

"Jenny, you no like zat name, eh?"

"Well, Jenny, I want a little of your extra time. All you'd have to do would be to talk some of your Tunis gibberish when asked for. Thirty-five cents the first hour, and twenty-five——"

"Shut up, you! get out! fade away!" replied the maid, skeptical of all men through much experience of scoffers. She enforced her refusal by throwing at him a poor orange conveniently at hand. "I think I catch your meaning," said he, taking it deftly on the fly. He would have argued the case further, but the proprietor of the place came forth to see what was interrupting the eloquence of his show-woman, ordered him off the premises, and all attempts to negotiate were useless.

His fortune in these efforts to find linguistic recruits was various. He came forth from the Hawaiian theater humming a cheerful refrain,

"She loves me, and I'll be true
To the girl in the yellow *holaku*,"

From which it could be inferred that things had gone well with him there. On the other hand, he was

squarely bluffed at the Javanese village; the results were rather adverse than otherwise among the Malays, the New-Zealanders, and the Dyaks of Borneo, though to many of these camps it was his second or third visit. He succeeded, it is true, at the Japanese bazaar and with the Hungarian orchestra, but, again, failed miserably at the Chinese village and the Dahomey village; and even made no great headway at the Mexican café.

The cry of "Hot! hot! hot! all hot, now!" rose loudly upon the air at intervals. Started by the dealers in Frankfurter sausage, and caught up naïvely even by the foreign venders of such different wares as ice-cream and cold beverages, it was swelling like a general menagerie roar, from the Wild West Show, with its broncos and cowboys, at one limit of the place, past that horn of dominion, the Ferris Wheel carrying people to great heights in buckets, to the Wild East Show, with its lions and Bedouins at the other, when Professor Sandfog's chief assistant came out of the Mexican café with a discouraged look. He was confronted by a short, slim young man, wearing two very conspicuous blue-satin badges with gold fringe. The newcomer halted before Murkle, tipped his hat forward by a deft rap from behind, with one hand, while with the other he felt forward and upward gropingly in the air. Next he shaded his eyes with one hand and looked out from beneath this covert with a long, level gaze such as sailors employ at sea; this dramatic action being supposed to express all the successive stages of far-off casual reminiscence, doubt, intense study and conviction

leading up to full and complete recognition, with attendant emotions.

"Jagstone!" exclaimed Professor Sandfog's assistant, imitating the same attitudes though in a less animated degree, "it is—it isn't—it must be, old Jagstone."

"Well by all that's hokey!" cried the newcomer, Jagstone, with an explosion of jovial heartiness.

"Sh—sh!" breathed the other in an expostulatory, warning, way.

"Eliot Shorter, well by all that's— Why I thought you were in Europe all this time, gone there for good."

"Not much it isn't Eliot Shorter; it's simply Murkle, James K. Murkle."

"Murkle me no Murkles. Don't I know you since the time when the memory of man runneth not to the contrary? Didn't we go to old Bowley's Institute together? Murkle be blown then!"

"Sh—sh!" repeated the other, gazing about with nervousness, "it's my stage name as you might call it."

"Oh, taken to driving stage, eh?"

"I might as well be, almost. I've tried pretty much everything *but* that, these last few months."

It appeared that they had not met in many years, and life had not treated them well in either case.

"I went into a broker's office in Wall street," said the lively Jagstone; "but look at the Vanderbilts and Goulds and look at me! After that I tried wholesale dry-goods. I was with Bedtick, Denim & Scrim till lately, ought oughty-four Broadway, New York. Not a partner, you know, only—er—ahem—in the packing-box department."

"And now you seem to be connected officially with the——"

"Yes, the nearby Keeley Gold Cure Convention."

"Oh, that's what those gaudy badges are for, is it? I thought you were a member of the Board of Directors of the Exposition at least."

"It's a disease, the way I'm took now and then," exclaimed Jagstone vehemently, "and most of the rest of the time I'm all right. That's the way you want to look at it, as a disease; that's the way science looks at it. You can't help having *some* complaint, can you? That is why we don't mind parading in public and showing what science is doing. Yes, we're here with our brass bands and our State flags; it's great. We're going to have a 'Keeley day' at the Fair." And confidentially, "I think I could get you in with us if you like."

"No, excuse me. I've never been troubled that way."

"Oh, I just meant as a kind of an honorary member, you know."

Murkle recounted in his turn various of his attempts to improve his fallen fortunes.

He related with a zest his several efforts here at the Exposition: he had tried being agent for the Cyclone Wash-tub, and the Salvation Lightning-rod; then he had been a "ticket-scalper"; next an attendant at the Californian ostrich-farm; later he had originated and launched the idea of Murkle's Big Bowl House, where very large bowls of coffee were given for a nickel.

"My greatest scheme of all," said he, "was turning a block of houses into the 'Superlative Hotel' simply by

running a big sign all the way along the top. We had cot-beds in the cellar, in the attic, on all the stairways, and in the back yard.—‘Home comforts’—‘a dollar a day and upwards.’ But I didn’t have capital enough to carry it through.”

“Yes, I recognize it, especially the ‘upwards’; I’ve been there myself.—But what I don’t understand about all this is how you got so down on your luck in this way. I always supposed you were a capitalist. Only a little while ago I was reading in the papers what a wide swath you were cutting in Europe.”

“A confounded medical chap told me that if I didn’t change my habits I would not live more than three years. I didn’t feel like changing my habits, so I divided what I had into three, and spent it as I went along. About the end of the time I saw how I was coming out, but it was too late to stop then. And there was a girl in the case, and so on. I was going to commit suicide, but I couldn’t think just then what way to do it; so I came to Chicago.”

“And what kind of a job have you struck now?” asked Jagstone, with friendly interest.

“A contract to supply an old party with an assorted collection of dagos, for some kind of a language scheme. He is a professor in a one-horse college, whom I noticed mooning around the Midway. He couldn’t make any more headway with those folks than a chicken, and I offered myself as an interpreter.”

“It ought to be easy enough to get those freaks. I should say you had a soft snap there—if it pays you.”

"Not so easy as you might think; it's often like pulling teeth."

"How is that?"

"Most of the time they don't understand a blessed thing I say. Then, in case they do, their managers won't let them out of the shows, to come; or if they have a day or half a day off, it isn't the same time. Say, you don't happen to know of a good, steady-going Patagonian, do you? One who has got over the first levity of youth, and would prefer a light job, a few hours a week, to high wages?"

"Lucky chaps, those freaks, eh? to get a living just by looking that way and wearing a few outlandish clothes," remarked Jagstone, "when we have to hustle so hard for everything. There's a nice hellion now"—as a poor native of southern India shuffled by in white cotton jacket and petticoat, and his hair put up with a comb like a woman's.

"In knocking round the world so much, I suppose you've picked up lingos, so you can talk with a good many of 'em, anyway?" he resumed.

Murkle half closed one eye, reopened it, and remained silent for a moment. Then he said briskly, "I don't know any lingo but my own, and not much of that, unless I count a little art students' slang I picked up once, at Mother Mirabelle's in Brittany."

Mr. Jagstone's manner presently changed and he took on a stiff and formal air.

"There are two thousand languages," said he. "There is one to about every three or five millions of people in Europe, one to every two or three millions in Asia,

one to every few hundred thousand in Africa, and one to every seventy or eighty thousand among the American Indians."

"What are you giving us?" asked Murkle, in surprise.

"The present Afghans are the lost tribes of Israel. The Tahitians have seven different ways of expressing 'smoke'——"

"And I have only one; but take a cigar, all the same. What are you driving at?"

"The Javans have seven different ways of saying 'hog,' ten for 'elephant,' and twenty for 'bread-fruit'——"

"I'll say all those first seven to you at once if you don't cut this out. What's the matter with you."

"The matter is that, as you admitted you are not posted in language, I'm giving you a specimen of my acquirements in that line."

"*Your* acquirements? In the old times you never knew enough to go in when it rained, and I don't believe you've learned it since. I say, Jagstone, where did you get that statistical stuff you just quoted?"

"Well, then, out of newspaper extracts in my pocket. Did it ever occur to you what a lot of education there is in a well-selected lot of newspaper items? You went to college and didn't need it, but I had to quit school early, and have to make up for lost time. Every now and then I cut out an item that suits my taste, especially in facts and figures, and salt it down. The only drawback is that they get worn out pretty fast, and then where are your facts and figures?"

"Lend me your items on language, will you, Jagstone? I may be able to work them in, some way."

"I've got a better one yet; it tells how to say 'I love' in forty-seven different languages," added Jagstone, feeling for his pocket-book to produce it.

"Oh, I must have that one, sure."

While they were thus conversing, a man of rough appearance accosting them inquired, "Which of you is the one that's hiring parties for some kind of a talking-match or language-show? I'd like to get a job in it," he said.

"What nation do you belong to?" Murkle asked him.

"I'm a Swizz," he made answer. His pronunciation of the word was like the sound of a buzz-saw or the sluing of a sled on the snow.

"What part of Switzerland are you from?"

"My grandmother was a Swizz, full-blooded; that was the way of it."

Murkle's eye rested upon him in a contemplative way. "Ever been anywhere near Patagonia?" he asked.

"I've worked mostly in logging-camps, up Stevens Point way, Wisconsin; and I've sailed considerable in the lake marine."

Jagstone slapped himself vigorously on the thigh when the "Swizz" had gone. "I've got an idea for you," said he; "that chap put it in my head."

"What is it?"

"Come down to camp to-night, and let us boys fit you out with all the foreigners you want."

"What camp are you talking about? I thought you

said you were with the Keeley delegates, at the Hotel Mecca?"

"No, for lodging I've joined some of the boys from the store; down at the Parthenon-Colosseum Camp, on Garfield Boulevard. It's lively and cheap, and I thought being about with the clerks might kind of help me in getting back into the store again—see? They're taking a fortnight's vacation here."

"How do you get to your confounded old camp?"

"Take the Elevated or any one of three street-car lines; it's only a few blocks from the 'Great Educator,' by four different entrances. I'll expect you at seven sharp. There are some college base-ball players and a banjo club stopping there, too. If you don't get down early they'll all be off for the evening."

While they discussed the matter further, Murkle proposed that they should go over together to the Ceylon pavilion, in the main precinct of the Exposition. "I've got a little personal business of my own to attend to there," said he: "I'm trying to sell 'em a disused road-roller, to use for a steam Juggernaut. They ought to be up to date in their apparatus."

Jagstone touched his head with a fore-finger significantly, saying: "Large brain, great mind; you'll succeed in this cold world yet."

As they passed near the Art Building, Murkle started at a glimpse of a feminine figure just disappearing in the portal. "Looks like a girl I used to be engaged to," said he.

"I suppose you've been engaged to a good many in your time?"

"Yes, quite a number; there's generally been some one filling the position."

The same evening Murkle appeared, about seven o'clock, before the group of canvas abodes constituting the "Parthenon-Colosseum Boarding Camp;—Fire-, Moth-, and Rust-proof," as its large sign indicated. Not long after the flaps of the principal tent had closed behind him sounds of revelry rose from within. Impromptu properties were got out and tossed about; and a speaker took the floor, and hilariously called attention to the fact that a costumer on Clark street had a large stock of masquerade apparel, which at that season of the year might be hired for almost nothing.

II

Two days after the conversation last mentioned, "Beauty Show Hall," at an early hour in the morning, was a scene of unusual animation. While the rest of the Midway Plaisance was still making its toilet, there entered the hall in question little groups in gabardines and togas, burnooses, tunics, and kilts, and in sombreros, turbans, and crowns of feathers. The beauty from the Engadine, whom Murkle had insisted on retaining, threw off a mackintosh that covered a becoming peasant costume. Yet, even with the advantage of a white waist, silver-embroidered stomacher, and bare arms, she did not greatly surpass in looks, Marie, from the "French Bakery," who, in the dress of ordinary civilization, was uncommonly dainty and

trim. Professor Sandfog came up from his room, No. 2125 of the "Himalaya Hotel," a mile distant, accompanied by his niece, Mary Shaft, who, with the consent of Leontine Himmel, was to lend her coöperation at a few of the opening meetings.

At the upper end of the room were arranged a large table with a phonograph upon it, a small table with writing-materials, a blackboard, and, on the wall, a diagram, or symbolical picture, which the professor had drawn with his own hand. Mr. Murkle began to marshal the gathering, of such motley dress and complexion, into a group, as prescribed by Professor Sandfog. It was to be crescent-shaped, the delegates from the outlying boundaries of the world forming the ends, and those from the rest of the universe the interior, which must gradually thicken toward the center.

"I want the Kamchatkan here on the right," said the professor, helping to put an oily little man, in furs, with fish-spear in hand, in proper position, "and the Patagonian at the left. Next the Kamchatkan you must put, as they would come in logical order, the Laplander and the Eskimo; and next the Patagonian the natives of the Cape of Good Hope and southern Australia."

The professor was especially pleased with the Patagonian. It had seemed doubtful up to the last moment whether any one from that remote region could be had. This was a splendid specimen, a large, raw-boned, copper-colored man, roughly tattooed, whose dress consisted of a kilt of fox-skins, a ragged *poncho*, or blanket, and a belt containing tobacco-pipe, knives, and

some curious arrangements which Murkle explained to be slings for hunting the ostrich. He conformed very closely to the accounts in the encyclopedias, which shows the accuracy of our works of education. The professor smiled at him and patted him on the back in a friendly way, and he responded with impressive salaams.

"His name is Or-kee-kee, or Chonek," Murkle explained, in answer to his employer's inquiries. "He—er—ahem—he had a brother herding cattle in the Argentine Republic, and, quite unexpectedly, they—er—at the last moment concluded to come up to the Exposition, to ride as *gauchos* in one of the Wild West shows."

"He's from Terra del Few-ee-go, the Land of Fire, down by those straits where so many vessels are wrecked, and he's a chief in his own country," here added another voice, which to anyone familiar with it might have seemed strangely like that of Jagstone.

Murkle administered to this speaker a surreptitious but forcible kick.

"Well, I wanted to get it all in," expostulated the latter, but not audibly. "What's the use of going down to the Newberry Library for information if you don't expect to make use of it?"

"Who is this man?" demanded the professor, turning suddenly upon him, surprised at the contrast between his appearance—for he was coffee-colored and attired in turban and a flowered dressing-gown—and the facility with which he spoke English.

"He's a Persian, a fire-worshiper. He's been on a

Reservation—I mean he's been to an English school; that's the reason he talks our own speech so well. He's a fullblooded Persian, and his name is Zory-as-ter."

Murkle consulted his list, and brought up one odd individual after another to take a place in the crescent. As he did so he would name him or half present him to the professor, as for instance:

"A Bulgarian, who speaks the Church Slavic, the sacred language of the Greek Church. A Russian—a Pole—a Kalmuck Tartar—a *modern* Greek."

The professor himself had brought a contribution, from his own hotel, a Danish chambermaid, just imported for the needs of the great caravansary, and innocent of the first syllable of English. She, with a Norwegian sailor and a Swedish day-laborer from the lumber-yards, represented the Scandinavian element.

The halberdier, with his halberd, was there from "Old Vienna"; and almost equally medieval and striking was a Papal guardsman, whose business it was to add to the illusion of the large model that was being exhibited of St. Peter's at Rome. For Italy came also men from the fictitious "Blue Grotto" of Capri and the "Venetian Glass Works"; for Spain, some one from the reproduced Convent of La Rábida (Columbus's convent); and for England, a waiter from the "Great White Horse Inn," for the English accent to be represented must be as racy as possible of the soil. Canada, too, was not overlooked. As to the United States, Mr. Murkle had undertaken to represent that country himself, aided by one of the Exposition force called a

"Columbian guard," who had strayed into the hall out of curiosity and was allowed to remain.

The aboriginal languages of the two American continents were exemplified by an alleged Comanche, an Algonquin, a Choctaw, a Chinook, a Micmac, and a Zuni or cliff-dweller a Mexican Aztec and an Otomi, a Tepehuan of Yucatan, a Carib, and a Guarany of Paraguay, together with the Patagonian as mentioned.

"I find an over-richness of representation here," said the professor. "These Indian languages are undergoing change and subdivision without end, are afflicted with an excessive pleonasm and polysyllabism, and are really of less importance than any others."

"And yet I took especial pains—but let that pass. But is not that a rather unpatriotic view to have of it?"

"Patriotism has nothing to do with science, and especially not with an experiment of this kind, which is for the benefit of all mankind."

"A Scotch bagpiper," continued Murkle presenting "a cottager from Lady Aberdeen's 'Irish village'; a Welshman from Festiniog; a Chinese laundryman, a Japanese student (educated in this country, 'extra intelligent'); my friend Kibob and another Turkish merchant, Hamed by name; a Tahitian; a Siamese; two Moorish sheiks, Sidi Brahim and Ben Sadoun; and an example of the Atlantean Africans, or, in simpler words, plain sea-shore darkies."

Something set the professor off in a disquisition on the difference between the Japanese and the Chinese, and the many popular errors on the subject.

Jagstone affected to swoon on a companion's shoulder at the long words used, as "agglutinative structure," "aggregated, as opposed to integrated, language," and the like; but briskly recovered, and declared that the professor had many first-class ideas not found in his (Jagstone's) collection of newspaper scraps, and edging along behind him, as he moved, to gather up as many of them as possible, he saw Murkle give friendly pats in passing to Marie and Frida, and he slyly managed to draw the attention of each to it in the case of the other, so that the relation of these two fair maids presently was one of jealous displeasure and hostility.

"Let me call especial notice, Professor," said Murkle, "to the completeness with which I have covered the central part of Asia, the ground that you consider the most important of all. Zoryaster, you get together, up here at the front, all the Zends, Parsees, Tibetans, Afghans, Armenians, Sanskritters, and folks of that stripe.—He has general charge of that group," he whispered to Sandfog.

"Zoroaster" did as directed. Murkle claimed to have a Buddhist from Ceylon, a Brahman from the north of India, a bonze from Tibet, a Beluchee, a Kurd, a dealer in praying-carpets from Turkestan, and an Armenian—from the State street Turkish bath. "That is to say, he was from Mount Ararat originally," he hastened to add. "He has often seen the site where the ark landed, after her forty days' cruise, and states that no trace whatever of damage to fences or other property is now visible."

"But—but—" the professor began, to protest

against so gross a misconception. Yet he let himself be overborne by Murkle, who talked on, indicating another couple:

"I have every reason to believe that this pair, Mirza Ferouk and Bulbul Effendi, are directly from the Plain of Shinar."

"A boot-blackening establishment on Clark street," remarked the Patagonian, confidentially, to the circle about him.

"You have done well—almost better than I could have expected," exclaimed Professor Sandfog, all a-flutter with content at so good a showing, and with happiness that the realization of his great scheme had actually begun. "How strange to think that we have before us inhabitants of the historic provinces of Bactriana and Sogdiana, dwellers by the Zagros range, the ancient 'gateway of nations.'"

"An Ashantee, a Raratongan, an Arawak, a Tschuwassian," pursued Murkle, still presenting his various types imperturbably.

"*Tchew!*" sneezed Jagstone as a bit of humor.

And now Murkle, having perhaps run through his list of appellations or forgotten part of it, went on very rapidly: "A Syenite, a Dolomite, a Trilobite, a Dynamite——"

"No, no," interrupted the professor, astonished; "that cannot be; you are wrong there; 'trilobite' is a fossil; 'syenite' is a rock; so is——"

"Well, what bigger fossils can you strike than most of these?" rejoined the assistant, in self-defense.

But Professor Sandfog did not understand facetious-

ness; insisting on setting right this confusion, some more probable names were recovered. Where they were missing entirely the individual was classified, like strange goods in a custom-house, according to that which he most resembled. The professor going back to his table said to his niece, Miss Shaft:

"Mr. Murkle is a young man of great energy and very useful to our enterprise, but his scholarship is quite inaccurate."

The world was now well belted round with representatives, arranged in their crescent-shaped order, and all was ready to begin. Professor Sandfog tapped upon his table.

"Will the meeting please come to order?" he commanded.

The niece placed herself at the small table beside him. Her business was to take down the new sounds, by stenography, for comparison with those which should be obtained by the phonograph.

"The meeting will please come to order," repeated the professor.

He took a long pointer, explained his diagram on the wall—a naïve performance, for the professor was but a prentice hand at drawing—and made an opening speech.

At the top of the diagram was the quotation from Genesis xi. 1: "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." The diagram consisted chiefly of two acute angles with long sides, the vertices turned outwards. In the vertex of one was shown the Tower of Babel, and people fleeing from it in wild con-

fusion along the divergent lines. In the vertex of the other was shown this Chicago Exposition of 1893, toward which the people, in motley array, were converging with every appearance of delight. Such words as "segregation," "fugacity," "multiformity," were sprinkled in large letters over the first triangle, and "aggregation," "stability," "unity," over the second. The design was marked "Anti-Babel," and was signed in large letters "Pausanias Sandfog."

The wondrous new language was (figuratively) to stop the vast stampede caused by the Scriptural "confusion of tongues" at the Tower of Babel, and all the nations of the earth would (figuratively) march in triumph to the Plain of Shinar, there to rest in peace and lucid, practical, good understanding, as they had ever done before.

"You see almost at a glance," he said, "the range and beneficence of the enterprise. Order is to be brought out of the chaos which has endured all these centuries since the Tower of Babel. I am glad to see you all here. I want every one of you to have an intelligent comprehension of what is to be done, so that I may count upon your hearty coöperation in the work. The universal language we are about to make, though new, will yet in reality be as old as the human race; and—er—each of you should realize that he has a proud and essential part in it. Bear in mind that this invention is going to be of greater importance to mankind than that of the railway or the telegraph. You must contrive to make them understand all that, Mr. Murkle?"

"I will pass the news around," replied Murkle, confidently.

"'Ear! 'ear!" shouted the delegate from the Great White Horse Inn; "Hip, hip, hooray!" the "Swizz" "*Hoop-là! ohé!*" French Marie; while Frida added an Alpine yodel; and elsewhere there was more than a suspicion of the Yale University yell: "*Brek-ke co-ax co-ax,*" etc. It was apparent that a good part of the audience had already understood and that the professor met with favor.

Prof. Sandfog now handed a small loaf of bread to Mr. Murkle. The latter, receiving it, took his position in the center of the crescent, facing the polyglot assemblage. Miss Shaft raised her pen expectantly.

"We will commence with the word 'bread,'" said the professor. "What more appropriate as a starting-point for a new language than the word which represents that which is the staff of life among all men and all peoples? Psammetichus, an Egyptian king, you recollect, caused two children to be brought up together in a tower, without communication with any one else, in order to see what they would say when they first began to speak. The first word they uttered was *bekos*, meaning 'bread,' from which some inferred that that language was the primitive speech of man."

"The doorkeepers in charge of them talked a lot and the children heard what they said; that's probably the way it was," said Murkle, skeptically.

"It may be. But I was going on to say that one of my ideas was to have such a gathering from all nations as we have assembled here to-day, live together; say, at

the same boarding-house, and then see what language they would strike out in common. That would have been another way of working toward the desired result."

Miss Shaft could not forbear uneasily consulting her watch.

The professor, observing this, broke off and said, "Mr. Murkle, will you now give the order to begin?"

Murkle held the loaf of bread aloft so that all could see it distinctly, and then began to beat time with it in a strenuous way. The loaf danced in his waving hand as on the crest of a breaker.

Arms upward, arms outward, arms crossing, arms outward, as weaving spells and conjurations, arms up, arms DOWN. This was the signal, and the general roar of "Bread!" broke out, Murkle's with the rest.

In accordance with directions given, each was supposed to shout "bread," in his own language. The hall of the Beauty Show vibrated throughout its length and breadth. When the reverberation had died away, Professor Sandfog looked at Mary Shaft with a face of beaming exaltation and triumph, and also of inquiry.

"I did not get a single syllable of it," she responded, with a worried air.

Turning then to his phonograph, he found that he had forgotten to press the vibrating plaque against the cylinder, so that it had taken no record. This oversight being repaired, he said:

"Let us have it over again—and in general, for greater accuracy, in these early stages it will be well to repeat the words somewhat often."

Again, with waving arms and passes, Murkle gave the signal, and the shout broke forth with a hearty good will, the explosion of sound being even louder than before.

"Br-r-od!" was the cry of the German halberdier of Old Vienna.

"Bröd!" that of the Danish chambermaid.

"Kr-r-obs!" that of the grave Bedouin, child of the desert.

"Nkanak!" vociferated the Armenian of Ararat.

"Amlök!" the Turkish merchants Kibob and Hamed. Kibob, on the whole, had concluded that they might do well enough to come.

"Pan!" the Spaniard.

"Pane!" the Italians.

"Pain!" the sprightly French soubrette.

"Pannada!" the Engadine girl.

"Khleb!" the Russian.

"Berena!" the Hawaiian dancer, Fetoia. She gave it in the same shrill and crooning tone in which she was wont to sing the *"Mau-u-lu-ul-u"* at the South Sea village.

The young jugglers Sinda Ram and Sarabiji, having no word for bread in the Hindu speech, threw in, as per agreement, *"Charu!"* the one that meant "biscuit."

The Japanese student piped up, *"Sho-ko-mo-tan!"*

"Pek-wej-igan!" whooped the Cris of Saskatchewan.

"Guaddaga!" clucked the Indian of Yucatan.

"Tlaxcalli!" crowed the Mexican Aztec.

And in like manner, each after his kind, whether from

their own knowledge or from hastily prepared lists, bawled the foreigners all along the line.

Again the professor consulted Miss Shaft. "What did you get this time?"

"It sounded to me something like *br-r-an-kak*," said she.

He reversed his phonograph and brought forth the facts it had registered.

It seemed as if there had been in that phonograph such a conflict of all the elements that it must burst asunder. The consonants and vowels, all possible gutturals, dentals, and labials, compressed into that narrow space, might be fancied to have choked, bit and scratched one another in a deadly strife; it was the linguistic conflict of all the ages repeated in an instant of time. Something had had to yield, and it did; whatever it was cannot be known, but there issued forth with some distinctness, surrounded by sizzlings and splutterings, a resultant *Branka!*

"Hurrah! victory! victory!" cried Professor Sandfog, quite beside himself with delight. "Do you see what a remarkable correspondence? The sound has impressed the phonograph and the ear of an acute observer in substantially the same way. The test is perfect. *Branka*—what a word!"

And he joyfully directed *branka* to be entered for "bread," as the first word of "Anti-Babel," the coming universal language.

The next word taken up was "milk." Mr. Murkle displayed to the audience a vial filled with milk, and

after sufficient time for inspection, "Are you ready?" he vociferated. "One—two—three—*milk!*"

"*Milch!*" now bellowed the German halberdier.

"*Mjölkl!*" the Swede.

"*Leche!*" the Spaniard.

"*Lapte!*" the Rumanian.

"*Mook!*" the Eskimo.

"*Chichi!*" the Japanese.

"*Dou-ghien!*" the Kamchatkan.

"*Okin!*" the Algonquin.

"*Py-huk-chi!*" the Choctaw.

"*Züt!*" the Turk.

"*Halif!*" the Arab.

"*Chir!*" the Persian.

"*Na bbà!*" the Otomi from the Mexican mountains.

"*Bagne!*" the Celt from the Irish village.

"*Nai!*" the Turkoman who dealt in praying-carpets.

"*Poï!*" a formidable Afghan.

As the uproar subsided, Jagstone was seen to feel of his bones as if to assure himself that they were all intact, and, "Are we all here?" breathed the Patagonian in pious aspiration. Yet this latter tall, raw-boned person was in reality a member of a foot-ball team, and as such must have been at home even in scenes of much greater confusion than this.

"What do you make it?" demanded the professor, eagerly.

"I make it *mootch-nay*, as near as I catch anything," Miss Shaft replied.

He turned his phonograph, and they listened. Again a word came forth, accompanied as by the mutterings

of a subsiding storm; the machine gave, cut in a pinched, metallic tone, something like the sound *mynch-nif*.

"*Mynch-nif* it is!" cried the professor, in high glee. "What force! what music!" And this term for "milk" was entered as the second word in the vocabulary of "Anti-Babel."

"We next take up, by way of variation, 'the sun,'" said he; "the orb of day, so vividly known to every human being. Our program consists, of course, at first of the things met with in the commonest daily experience. 'The sun'—are you ready?"

A large placard with a picture of the sun was held up to view. "Are you ready?" repeated Murkle to his audience in the crescent. "Let her go, then; altogether, now—sun!"

The resultant was pronounced to be *snix-rin-ge-ou*. The Finnish *awringo*, the Japanese *nizi-rin*, and the Provençal *soleou* had apparently entered into it, to the exclusion of most of the rest.

"The moon" was about to be called next, when a disturbance was noted on the floor. The Chinese laundryman had taken his hat, in dudgeon, and was going away. The professor hurried down from his post in person to see about this trouble. "We cannot possibly spare such an important element as the Chinaman," said he. "He is at present our only representative of the speech of three hundred millions of men; we cannot do without him; he must not go."

"Somebody pulled his cue, and made him mad," explained Chief Assistant Murkle. "I guess it was that

Bulgarian there, or the Malabar man, either one— You don't want to be too funny in these language-studies, you chaps—But you're allee litee now, aren't you, John? Don't pay any attention to 'em. Catchee twenty-five centee more; if goee 'way, no catchee nothing, see?" And in a mollifying way he pushed him back into the ranks.

"Zwoot!" snorted the alleged Bulgarian.

"Harmony, gentlemen, harmony! The kindest feelings alone are becoming to this kind of scientific labor," appealed the professor.

In an instant he was off on a new tangent. Addressing the man from Malabar, he said, "I want you to step to the blackboard and write me a specimen of the beautiful Malabaric characters."

This man, in his desperation, managed to kick Murkle in the shins and asked of him *sotto voce*: "What am I to do now?"

"He replies that it is not written any longer—except by the—er—by a very low class of people," returned Murkle, with lame invention.

"Oh, there is surely some mistake about that; you cannot have understood him."

The professor thereupon took the man by the arm and convoyed him to the blackboard. The victim held a piece of chalk, closed his eyes desperately, and was just about to inscribe some kind of figures at random, when he was saved by the casual interposition of Miss Shaft, who called attention to the fact that time was passing, and asked if it would not be well to postpone such not strictly related matters till a later date. The

professor, not really averse to being brought up with a round turn in his wandering tendencies, accepted the suggestion.

The words "moon" and "star" were next given in good style; and then said Murkle:

"Our delegates can give the expression 'I love,' in forty-seven languages. I have drilled them on it myself, and I should take pride in showing how well they can deliver it, if you will hear it."

"He's a cool hand," muttered Jagstone in keen surprise, and slapped himself on the thigh for emphasis.

The professor gladly assented.

Thereupon the large chorus called out "I love" in its various forms, the Greek rendering it as "*agapo*," the German as "*ich liebe*," the Frenchman as "*j'aime*," the Russian as "*loubliou*," the Swede as "*jag elskar*," the Cambodian as "*khuhôm sreland*," and so on down the list. There was even a Volapük "*lofob*"; and the Japanese gave "*watakusi wa suki masu*."

The result was adjudged to be *yig srubs*. The numerous extra, overlapping syllables of the Japanese were ruled out as unnecessary and inadmissible.

Amid the din and clangor of this particular expression two new female figures had been seen to enter the hall. These were Mrs. Sandfog, or "Aunt Fiducia," and Mary Shaft's protégée, Miss Leontine Hammel. The Professor's wife, being little interested in his doings otherwise, had come to find him to make a new draft for money. Miss Leontine had had occasion to see her chaperon, and meeting Aunt Fiducia at the door

had been assured by the latter that it was quite in order for them to come in together.

The visitors, startled by the tremendous uproar, pushed on, not seeing very distinctly what was before them till they reached the upper end of the room.

Leontine found her attention first drawn by the professor's curious diagram on the wall. She said of this confidentially to Mary:

"I've always wondered why it wouldn't have been better to let them go on with the Tower, if they were so simple. It could not have been quarter as high as the modern 'sky-scrapers,' and nobody accuses those of being any too near heaven."

Their remarks were drowned under new roarings, giving the affirmative word "yes," followed by the negative "no," and this, in short order, by the words for "sword" and "spear."

The "*Yaxo!*" and "*Nein!*" of the stout halberdier were something prodigious; and when it came to the weapons, his halberd was seen waving above the swaying throng with prodigious enthusiasm. Always the "Swizz" came in a heavy second, and the bass notes of the Patagonian a good third, but many of the others often seemed quite obliterated.

"No, no; stop!" exclaimed the professor; "this will not do. A greater uniformity of tone must be secured. I fear that some are led by the promptings of a patriotic impulse to seek undue, unfair, advantage for their own form of speech. The feeling is a creditable one under ordinary circumstances; but here, where science desires the rights of all in the exact and natural

proportion, there is no need of it, and I trust that such misguided attempts will cease."

"Let yourselves down a few pegs, boys," commanded Murkle, supporting this request. "You, there, especially, Chonek, halberdier Schtürmer, and Swizz-amajig, we're talking to you. Nobody is allowed to make any more noise than anybody else. You want to strike an even gait, understand?"

Some familiar tone in the voice of this master of ceremonies caused Leontine a mood of reminiscence. His back remained turned to the party, in consequence of his duties to the crescent, and he wore burnoose and fez; but her fine dark eyes began to follow him pensively—and thus to see his manner toward Frida and Marie.

"Water" was distilled from Professor Sandfog's wondrous language alembic as *ak-ox-amtch*; "sword" as *mtspay*; "rose" as *grosła*; "tooth" as *drentko*; and "cow" as *vakust*.

"I don't know as I should really like, in the long run, words with so many consonants in them, all in a bunch. Should not something be done about that?" suggested Mary Shaft, very mildly.

"Not at all, not at all," rejoined the professor, enraptured with his work. "They are full of melody: *ak-ox-amtch*, *mtspay*—what a force! what charm! Is there not, when you come to think about it, a strange familiarity about them? Does it not seem to you as if you had always heard them?"

The colors, ordinary articles of dress, and the ordinary animals, were next to be dealt with. The professor caught up a large placard representing the

horse,—a placard of the kind used by school children,—and thrust it into the hands of Miss Leontine.

"Here, you hold this, if you will be so kind," said he. "Everybody is at work, and you will assist us a great deal by leaving Mr. Murkle free to attend to the securing of good order and precision of time."

There was, indeed, need of some one to attend to the matter of order; for as the end of the hour approached, a spirit of unruliness was growing, which extended even to those delegates who were real foreigners and not merely the imitation kind.

But a keener ear than before was now listening to their speech, and a keener eye observing their appearance. There were many discrepancies in dress which it would hardly require a trained ethnologist to detect. The headpiece worn by Zoroaster was very like a baseball player's mask, and his dressing-gown had never come from the land where the bulbul sings to the rose. Why should a Kalmuck Tartar include in his attire padded foot-ball trousers and an Oxford mortar-board? And while a representative of the Provençal districts would have worn a short cloak and slashed doublet a few hundred years ago, he certainly would not do it now; nor would his mandolin be apt to have a large "Y" upon it, usually standing for the glee-club of a well-known university.

James Murkle turned about to see who it was that had been charged with a portion of his labors. His eyes met hers, and he had an air as if he would sink through the floor in sudden confusion. But before Leontine, even more astonished than he, could throw

down the placard, as her impulse was, and let her recognition of him be known, he gave out the stentorian command for the next word—"horse."

"*Cheval!*" "*Caballo!*" "*Cal!*" "*Pferd!*" "*Häst!*" "*Aspo!*" "*Hippos!*" "*Koma!*" his strange cohorts roared with deafening clamor. And Leontine thought she heard, with the rest, "Three beers!" from the "Swizz," and "Hot, hot, hot! all hot!" from the Patagonian.

The moment this was over—for all was going rapidly now—Professor Sandfog thrust upon her a terrestrial globe, almost forcing her to hold it aloft in both hands. She did so, a sweet young feminine Atlas, with a look of uneasiness, alarm, and protest on her face, while the combined cry of "*Wereld!*" "*Mundo!*" "*Lume!*" "*Aleu!*" "*Svet!*" and the rest, resounded all about her. But as soon as released she ran to Miss Shaft, and, flushing deep with excitement, said:

"Mary, some of these persons are not what they pretend to be. I am sure that many of them are not foreigners at all. The conductor, that young man in Moorish dress—well, he is—he is not——"

A new roar, this time a continuous one, drowned her explanations. Counting had begun. The professor had written on the blackboard the numerals from one to ten, and all were reciting them in unison.

"*Kahi, lua, kola, ha, lima, ono, kika, walu, umi,*" went the Hawaiian maid.

"*O-um, beni, temro, jethro,*" the Persians. \

"*Jik, y, sam, si,*" the Chinaman.

"*Asa, duwa, tija, âmpat,*" the Malay.

This exercise offered an unparalleled opportunity for including with the rest any wild farrago of nonsense, all to be condensed together in the phonograph and in Miss Shaft's stenographic notes. Each person who had forgotten his word replaced it with anything that entered his head.

One of the students bethought him to give the declension of an Anglo-Saxon noun. Another chanted off a list of the delegates to the Congress of Religions. The alleged Guarany Indian conjugated the present of his verb "to be" as follows: "*Tini, ereini, oini, oroini, neini, peini.*" This set one of Jagstone's former confreres, the Bedtick, Denim and Scrim clerks, to reciting pure and simple the counting-out formula with which children organize their games:

*"Een-y, meen-y, mine-y, now,
Catch a darkey by the toe,
If he hollers let him go,
Een-y, meen-y, mine-y, now."*

The Fijian, carried away by pleasant excitement, struck a mighty blow upon his tom-tom; the native of Java smote his *jambang*, and the Hungarian musician clashed his cymbals. At the same time a sailor cried, as if hauling on the yards, "Heigh-ho, haul away! 'Renzo, boys, 'Renzo!" the students delivered their college yell, and the Patagonian and a little knot of comrades, hopping first on one foot, then on the other, poured out a choice repertory of French art-student jargon.

These latter, above all, Leontine recognized. She would endure no more. She flew to the professor, to warn him.

"I want to tell you, I want to put you on your guard," she began breathlessly. "There are mistakes made here; you are being misled."

But his mind was all wrapped up in his work, and he received her statement in only an absent or dazed way.

"Yes; of course some few mistakes will occur," he rejoined patronizingly. "That is unavoidable. In the word 'bread,' for instance, I am aware that several may have given their general word for 'food.' Still, we may rely, I think, upon a substantial accuracy."

She saw that further parley with him was idle, and running impulsively down the hall, confronted Murkle himself. This young man in consternation bent his head and pulled the Turkish fez lower upon his brow; but a fez does not lend itself well to the disguise of the human features.

Mrs. Sandfog took advantage of this intermission to settle with her husband the matter of her request for money.

"Five minutes for refreshments!" cried the Kalmuck Tartar. "May I offer you a piece of *brankak* and a glass of *mootch-nif*?" said the Fijian to Jagstone.

Mary Shaft, having at length realized who young Murkle was, had misgivings and thought of her duty toward Leontine's father. But she would have had none could she have witnessed the manner of Leontine's interview with her former suitor. This meeting had com-

pletely disillusioned the maiden and cured her of any lingering or repining over her broken engagement.

"Eliot Shorter," she began sternly, "how can you, how *can* you engage in such a shameless fraud?"

"Go on, let us have your opinion of it in full," he returned sullenly, affecting bravado. At the same time he edged away, so that the exposure need not be heard by the others. In this she was well satisfied to follow him.

"I did not realize that it was really you till I heard that French *blague* you picked up at Mother Mirabelle's, in Brittany. You were forever quoting it to us: '*Ohé la rentière*' and the rest—I should know that anywhere. What do you, what must you, think of yourself to be the leader in plotting all this ridiculous nonsense, to take in the poor innocent professor?"

"Honest, Leontine, the other fellows faked up about half the stuff. They spent a whole day at the library copying out of the books."

"Yes, under your direction. I am going at once to tell the professor of the gross imposture that has been put upon him."

"If I were you I wouldn't; he will not thank you for it. He is looking for glory—for himself and McCorkleville University, and it won't please him to learn he has not got it. Better let him down easy, at any rate. I will resign; and I can tell him that the dagos' bosses needed their services and would not let them come back."

There was a trace of reason in this which slightly mollified her severe expression. With a consummate

impudence the scapegrace seized upon it as a sign that she was completely relenting.

"Now that we meet in this lucky way," he proposed, "what do you say to calling our engagement on again? I understand that you never really wanted to break it off; it was all your family's doing."

The hopeless reprobate stood revealed. Leontine's expression grew as stony as adamant.

"Nobody else would have done half as well by the professor as I did," he persisted. "A lot of these natives were *real*; I could have run in twice as many of the make-believe kind on him if I'd wanted to."

She even thanked heaven now for his supreme brazenness. "All that chapter of the past is closed," she returned. She had become ice of the most glacial age.

The jovial chorus, seeing their leader so long in conference with a pretty girl, thought it appropriate to shout anew their "I love" in forty-seven languages. The last interview of the forever sundered pair concluded amid stentorian howls of:

"Yig srubs!"

THE MAN WHO MADE BELIEVE HE HAD FAILED

IN the rich and famous city of Greater New York lived a young man who was not entirely sure that his wife was in love with him. He determined to put the matter to the test.

"How do I know," said he, "that it was not all just due to her natural pleasant disposition, and that she would not have married any one of a dozen other passable sort of fellows quite as readily as myself? How can I be sure that, in her sight, I am the elect beyond all others? Would she do any of those extraordinary things for me that you read about in the books, where love is properly described? Would she go through fire and water for me, and through thick and thin? Would she perform remarkable physical feats, or rise to heights of moral heroism?"

"How does anybody know that, about anybody's wife or husband?" was a reflection that occurred to him in answer to this.

"That is all very well," his mental argument proceeded, "but the difference between me and other people is that I am not satisfied to rest in this state of uncertainty, while they are."

Therefore he determined that the matter must be put to the test. He, Edwin Nickleton, resolved that his

young wife, Ardella, with whom in the two years of their married life he had never had a trace of a falling out, who in his eyes was perfection itself, the most companionable, the sweetest, the most charming of persons, should undergo a searching ordeal. She must be tried as by fire, she must emerge from the crucible—as he had little doubt she would—refined gold. Then, and then only, would he be rid of this erratic caprice, rid of all his uncertainties; and he would live ever after as quite the happiest of men.

He had never read in that fine old story, the “Curious Impertinent,” that *“To make a Tryal which may turn to our own detriment, and . . . in which succeeding we can be no better off than before, is the part of a Mad-man,”* or, if he had read it, he gave no sign of being influenced by it in the smallest degree.

In what should the proposed ordeal consist? He thought somewhat of falling off a wharf, or out of a canoe, to give Ardella a chance to save him; but, although Ardella could swim, it was only to a slight extent, and she would really not be seriously to blame if she should not save him, but should confine herself to calling for help. Or he might contrive to get down a precipice from which he could only be hauled up by means of a rope she could make by tearing up and twisting together the greater part of her clothing. Or he might throw himself under an omnibus; or again he might represent that his character was fatally damaged. There were serious drawbacks to all the courses proposed and it seemed as if it might be years before a proper opening would present itself.

It was along in the middle of May that he hit upon the idea that seemed to meet his needs. It came to him at the Queens County Horse Show, on seeing her surrounded and fêted in the gay bustle of fashion and display that marked the occasion. They had just taken a prize in the tandem class.

"Suppose I should lose my money," said he; "how would she stand it?"

"Yes, I have it," he repeated with conviction: "I must pretend to lose my money."

The greater part of his, Edwin Nickleton's, income was derived from the wholesale dry-goods house of Nickleton and Company, Worth Street, established by his father, the late Rufus Nickleton. His wife, Ardella, was aware of this; so that, if he failed, Nickleton and Company must fail too; and this course was beset with the gravest difficulties. They must fail in such a way that neither they nor anybody else should know anything about it; otherwise their credit would receive a damaging blow. Furthermore, they two, Edwin and Ardella, would be embarrassed to death with the condolence or other curious attentions of a large circle of acquaintances, whose notice would be directed to their supposed adversity.

"In a book, now," said Edwin, after mulling over it for a month—meanwhile treating his wife to some minor trials, all of which she stood beautifully—"the thing would be represented as being perfectly possible. The idea is not a bad one, but—in real life, bless me if I can see a sixteenth of an inch before me how to go about it!"

The coming on of the summer unusually early gave him a practical sort of illumination on his problem. People began to go away to the country. He meanwhile resisted every proposal in that direction, and wondered if he might not act when everybody was out of town.

"I could carry it off under cover of the vacation," he reflected. "The experiment need not take long; a week, I judge, at the most; and then—explanation, high glee, and immeasurable confidence and happiness for evermore!"

A fortuitous circumstance down town gave him the final inspiration, and actually fixed the moment for launching his enterprise. He was wont to go to Worth Street occasionally, flattering himself on having a semblance of occupation. There he learned that the shutters were to be put up at the store of Nickleton and Company for the last three days of the current week, for the purpose of taking an inventory and making some needed repairs in the interior.

He rushed to his abode on Thirty-fourth Street—a fine, wide, ancestral one, such as but few can afford to occupy in these days of monstrously augmenting land values—meaning to break the pretended news at once to Ardella. That is, he would prepare her by mystic hints and fears of evil for the definite blow, of bankruptcy, to follow in a day or two. This would be apparently proved by the sight of Nickleton & Co. shut up and seemingly gone out of business.

But, arrived there, he found Ardella gone to her grandfather's, at Morristown. She had left a note,

reading, "They are off to Maine suddenly, and want me till Thursday. It's a little secret, what it's all about; perhaps I'll tell you when I get back, if you're good; but perhaps never."

Edwin thought it better on the whole that she was away, for now he could *write*, and spare himself the embarrassment of beginning his course of mendacity face to face.

He wrote melodramatically of a dark shadow that threatened their young lives. "I mention no detail, not a single one," he said; "may our fate grant that there never be any to name! I have hesitated, I hesitate still, to touch upon the matter with you, but I ask myself, if the worst should come, whether it would be right in me to have left you wholly unprepared. Matters may now eventuate rapidly. You might glance, as you come up town—this much I will say, and this only—at Nickleton & Co.'s. There you may see something to confirm, or to dispel, these gloomy forebodings. But we will cross no bridges before they are reached. Your presence here is not needed yet; finish out your visit; on no account hasten your return; I insist upon this."

He overdid it apparently; for Ardella, instead of waiting till Thursday, flew to New York and joined him on Wednesday, all wrought up with fears worse than the most dreadful of certainties.

"Oh, Edwin!" she cried, "what is it? What terrible thing has happened?"

"My love, my dearest——" he stammered. He hastened to assume the proper air of depression, but was

slow in getting under way, as he had had nothing yet fully prepared.

"I stopped at the store as I came up," she interrupted, breathlessly, "and there was nothing at all different about it. What did you mean? I talked with Mr. Blaffson, and he said everything was as usual."

"You stopped there? You talked with the senior partner?" exclaimed Edwin, aghast. Then, recovering himself with a violent effort, "Ah, I see it all; they tried to keep it from you. Bless their kind hearts! I honor them for it—but to-morrow, to-morrow, the shutters will be up; the long-established business, the once proud house of Nickleton and Company—importers and—and—jobbers of dry-goods——" And with this he broke down appropriately, and veiled his eyes in a white handkerchief.

"Then you mean that you have failed, Edwin? Is that it? You—we have lost our money? We are going to be poor?"

Edwin moved his head in a way that some might have taken for energetic nodding, and others only for a twisting about to ease the pressure of an incommoding collar.

"Fortune—friends—hope—all—all——" he murmured.

He tried to find a poor kind of comfort for his conscience in the fact that he had not answered her question categorically. No indeed; he had only muttered a few broken words, whereupon she had drawn her own conclusions; and if people will jump at conclusions, whose fault is it but their own?

Ardella threw herself into his arms, though he affected to repulse her. "Would it not be better that you should leave me, Ardella?" he protested. "Can I be of any further use to you now? Your grandfather—your friends—— Why should you bind yourself to my unhappy lot?"

"You silly person! Isn't that just what a wife should do? We'll begin the world over again; I think I shall rather like it. Do you suppose I care? I'm dreadfully sorry about it on your account, Edwin dear—I am, I am; but don't let it worry you for a moment, as far as I am concerned!"

Now, some might have thought this quite a sufficient test, an admirable and conclusive one. But not so Edwin Nickleton. It was not to be denied that she had met the crisis thus far like a trump; he particularly liked the spirit of comradeship involved in her use of the pronoun "we"—"Have *we* lost our money?" etc., etc.,—it being the fact that Ardella never had had any distinctly of her own. He was inclined to give up the ordeal on the spot. Nevertheless he felt obliged sternly to continue, through this further consideration:

"Might not almost anybody, in the first excitement of the moment, take it in about that way? Common politeness would dictate a sympathetic manner of talking to the loser. There has been no pressure, no pinch of hard circumstances as yet; she does not realize what adversity is. No, we must see how she will stand the actual fact, and not the mere words. I've got to observe how she will put up with a new and poor way of life."

He insisted that they should move immediately from the luxurious house on Thirty-fourth Street.

"I thought," suggested Ardella, timidly, "that as the house could probably not be rented at this season, we might stay till it was, and so have a good deal of time to look about us."

"No, no, not at all. I see that you do not understand the matter of bankruptcies, Ardella; nor could it be expected that you should."

He would let her take away none but a few odds and ends of her personal belongings.

They went to a flat in East Sixteenth Street, in the eighth story of a building that belonged to the Nickleton Estate. In the course of collecting some rents for the firm, he had chanced to know that the family that occupied it had gone to Ocean Grove for a month. They were only too glad to add a little to their income, and he had arranged to take it just as it was, for the time of their absence.

"I fancied that when people failed," said Ardella pensively, "they went to some quiet country village, and lived, very economically, in a cottage."

Edwin saw in this a desire of escaping the really trying feature of the case; for a cottage in a quiet village, in the hot vacation season, might be scarcely any hardship at all.

"No, they have to go to the upper part of Harlem, or to Hoboken, or Greenpoint," he replied; "fortunate indeed are we to have such a roof as this over our heads. But, oh! dearest Ardella, this cannot, this must

not, be for long; a brighter day will surely dawn upon us."

Edwin had pushed his imagination well towards its farthest limits in coming to this small flat; he could not conceive of his, Edwin Nickleton, descending to lower depths of squalor. But, as a matter of fact, the apartment was not at all uncomfortable; it was scrupulously neat; it had a wide view over the roofs of men, off to the river; and when Ardella had put up a few favorite photographs and her travelling-clock, suppressed the worst of the Philistine decorations, and made some deft arrangements with draperies of Turkey red, the effect was really pleasing.

"With Turkey red and taste," said she, playfully—her nice ankles showed to excellent advantage on the top of a step-ladder—"you can do anything. And even without taste."

They passed the first few days taking simple excursions, to Staten Island, to Fort Lee, and Fort George. Ardella looked very pretty, and used her best efforts as a comforter. Naturally gay and lively, the change to a certain seriousness was novel and not at all unbecoming to her; Edwin pronounced it, mentally, a great success. Now and then he would heave a vast hypocritical sigh over the vicissitudes of life, and say:

"Yes, we are gone to-day, and here to-morrow—but how many others are there not who have also had their ups and downs in this world? We must struggle on and ever and hope for the best."

He contrived to induce Ardella to promise not to go to the part of the town in which they had lived, nor to

acquaint anybody with what had happened, not even her own family, at New Haven. Fortunately for his scheme they had gone away early, to Canada, so there was no danger of any of them dropping into New York for a visit. The prohibition as to her family bore upon Ardella with especial rigor, since she had been accustomed to share with them all her joys and sorrows. Resigned, but yet inquiring, she tried to learn the reason of this. Edwin put her down with a lot of jargon taken at random out of law books.

"You cannot understand about collateral, assignees, fiduciary attachments, *a priori*, guardian *ad litem*, and masters-in-chancery," said he. "They're a hard lot of things and parties to deal with. But this I will promise you, that at the earliest possible moment, and it cannot be long, my request for secrecy shall be withdrawn."

For himself he felt the need of constant stir and activity, to curtail too lengthy conferences and need of explanation with her. So too he absented himself much. He was supposed to be seeking any kind of work, however poor but honest, that might pull them through; and was also supposed to be aiding in winding up the affairs of the firm. When at home he watched her like some friendly inquisitor who might have a particularly interesting victim on the rack.

To save time, it was necessary to force matters, and to have Ardella assailed in imagination by many evils which she would not actually experience. He had therefore subscribed to a Press Clipping Bureau. This Bureau supplied him with clippings, at \$5 the hundred, relating to bankruptcies, and families which had fallen

into distressing straits on account of them. The choice extracts from these he would read aloud to Ardella, or would scatter over her toilet table, and then observe the effect.

"So you find, Ardella," he said, one evening, "that your friends cut you, eh? Pass you by, like the good Samaritan, on the other side? Does not even your own family now take on a severely patronizing tone, and tell you, that if you had only done thus and so, how much better it would be for you? It is the way of the world. We must expect it. Yes, one day, perhaps, homeless, fireless, hungry, abandoned by all, we shall have only each other to turn to as the final resource in our ills."

All this was pure irrelevance, for the next moment he was interrupted with, "It seems to me I wouldn't mention 'fireless' in this weather. And you must know that the good Samaritan passed by on the *same* side."

"Well, I know there was an off-side play there somewhere," he muttered in a confused foot-ball jargon.

"And there is not a soul in town," continued the young wife. "Besides, you forget that, by your own request, I am not writing at all to my family now."

"I know, I know, of course," he stammered. "I mean to say—that is—I was just forecasting the future, as it may be when the news of this gets out."

Ardella steadily refused to take the lugubrious tone. She made every allowance for Edwin. She ascribed his many strange ways to the catastrophe. She sometimes vaguely feared that his mind was unbalanced, for excessive dread of poverty, like the illusion of riches, is one of the common forms of mental disturbance.

His pretence of poverty, in truth, sat very uneasily upon him, and this was the occasion of a sudden fright that decided him to bring his strange experiment to a conclusion. Forgetful again, he took an expensive box at one of the roof-gardens where people tried to keep cool in the hot summer evenings. They had hardly sat down in it when they were recognized by a couple who had just entered another box—friends up from Southampton, on their way to Bar Harbor—and they beat a hasty retreat.

It was a warning to stop while it was still time. "A week and a little more," reflected Edwin, "is a shorter trial than I should have liked, but danger lurks on every side; it is best to end it. I will disclose the truth to Ardella, we will laugh at the excellent joke, ha! ha! ha! and she will rejoice with me at the establishment of a bond of confidence between us that can never henceforth be shaken."

But somehow—ha! ha!—the laugh—ha! hum!—did not ring so merrily when he tried to tell her. Who was to say that Ardella would remain entirely good-natured when she learned that she had been so distrusted, and had been put to such great inconvenience for nothing?

On the whole, he determined not to confess the stratagem to her. He would adopt, instead, the plan of representing that the affairs of Nickleton & Co. had unexpectedly taken a favorable turn, and that they were not really bankrupt, but might go back and live in their house again. This involved a little more duplicity, but a little more or less now could hardly matter. As to his whole scheme he had had the feeling of Bassanio that

it was well enough "to do a great right to do a little wrong." "Ardella need never know of the useless ordeal she went through," he resolved. "We will live it down, and I will more than make this up to her in a thousand ways."

But the execution of this new plan and *dénouement* found itself indefinitely postponed, owing to the following circumstances:

Ardella, having to cross town one day, happened entirely by accident, into their own block on Thirty-fourth Street. The house looked as natural as possible, not at all deserted. Mrs. Gramble, the housekeeper, caught sight of her from the door, came out to her with some letters, asked after the pleasure of her stay at Seabright—she was supposed to be at Seabright, then?—and said Mr. Edwin had been there that morning to see that everything was in good order.

Ardella conducted herself very cautiously and discreetly in this interview. And very discreetly she conducted herself, too, at Nickleton & Co.'s, whither she next repaired. Her first theory, of Edwin's being half out of his mind, received no support at either place. Mr. Blaffson, the senior partner, knew no reason for worry or overwork on Edwin's part. Had seen him not later than yesterday, speeding his horses on the boulevard, and had especially remarked that he never saw him looking better in his life.

There was a look of exaltation and high purpose, not altogether beatific, in the eyes of Ardella as she rode up town in the Elevated, after these interviews.

Edwin came in an hour or two later, primed with his

purpose to end the test. An astonishing look of bareness in the apartment diverted him from it at first, and then the opening words of conversation dissipated it entirely. Ardella's trim ankles were again displayed on the step-ladder, but this time they were moving about with a kind of vicious energy; she was dismantling the place, instead of ornamenting it.

"Where are all the things, Ardella?" he inquired.

"It seemed better to dispose of the bulk of them; I found we were living in a useless luxury even now."

"To dispose of them?" he exclaimed, aghast. "Why, what—what——?"

"I have always understood that after a failure it was the custom to pawn things, in order 'to keep the wolf from the door.' I don't understand why I had not thought of it before."

"But—but—allow me, Ardella—you can't do that, you know, with other people's furniture. This is a hired flat; they can come down on us for heavy damages."

In keeping with this excessive burst of zeal, she began to economize on their household expenses, cutting them to the very quick. The food became poor and scanty. Sometimes she would take him out to cheap restaurants and try and make him eat the most wretched dinners, while she sat by toying with the pepper and salt, and showing no consciousness that it was not all equal to Delmonico's or the Waldorf-Astoria.

She directed the maid to become slatternly in her appearance, and to let the smells of cooking pervade as much as possible the living-rooms and hall. She even

tried to appear slatternly herself, but of such an in-born neatness and pulchritude was she—like some of the trimmer animals—that this resulted in nothing worse than going without a collar—which but displayed to the more advantage the graceful junction of her head and neck—or she combed her hair a little less carefully, and this only left the vagrant tendrils and filaments to curl about her face in a way altogether fascinating.

When Edwin went to the closet to put on his best clothes, he found them missing.

"We must be content with plain living and high thinking," she replied to his look of concern. "And I suppose your protest against pawning rented furniture cannot apply to surplus clothing."

She managed to retain him most of the time at her side, that he might have no chance now to speed his horses on the boulevard. And she purposely sent him out, whenever he went, with a shabby look, even dinting in his hat with her shapely white fist before handing it to him, to aid the effect. She cut off the cheap excursions, and even made him walk to save car-fare.

"If he is for poverty," said she to herself, "I shall give him the limit."

These preposterous methods would have been met by reaction and rebellion, except that she covered them with her most honeyed sweetness. As for herself, buoyed up no doubt by a sense of rectitude, she endured all the discomforts with a smiling expression, not merely of contentment but pleasure. When the strain had ar-

rived near the breaking-point, she contrived a very telling blow by saying:

"I am afraid you will hardly have patience with me for saying this, Edwin dearest, but there is something about this free, natural, frugal life of ours that fills a long-felt want. Could you forgive me if I said I even preferred it to the other?"

It staggered him. He had been wondering if she had begun to suspect, and while uncertainty on that point remained, no step could be taken; but this was the secret: she liked it! Where was his ordeal now? what was left of his crucial test? It followed, too, from this that if there was any sense of obligation in the marriage, it must be on his side, and not hers. What warrant was there now for ever proposing to go back to a civilized way of living?

The same evening as he lay on the sofa after dinner, she hummed him a pretty French ballad about a fine prince who wooed a shepherdess, and asked her to come and live at the court with him. "Oh, no indeed," replied the shepherdess. "I couldn't give up my sheep. You must come and live in my cabin with me."

"By Jove! is she rubbing it in? Does she suspect?" He caught himself by the hair with both hands, and soon "went out into the night," as one of his romantic stories would have said, to wrestle with the idea. He could not decide either for or against.

No later than the next day, when he came home—having just dodged an acquaintance, who might easily have come down the same block and recognized them—he found Ardella, without hat or wrap, making a pur-

chase from a baker's wagon, at the curbstone. He was quite indignant in his line of reproach, pointing out that even the women on the social scale of those apartments did not step out into the street in such unconventional fashion.

"We must put down false pride, and not feel above our station," she responded, meekly; "and who knows that we may not have to go down, down, to a much lower level yet?"

"We certainly shall, if you load us with many more 'sinkers.' Throw them away." For it was a dozen of the oleaginous crullers thus called in popular speech that she had bought, purposing to set them before him.

Ardella would now requote to him sweetly, from time to time, the choice cases from the Clipping Bureau extracts, dwelling on the pathos and the marvel of them—"Oh, she *must* know, he would reflect; or has her mind become affected?" For it was now his turn to wonder whether there had begun to be anything the matter with her intellect. Yet more maddening were her ingenious questions into the details of the bankruptcy. "I feel that a wife should know all about her husband's affairs," she would say in accounting for this.

Edwin, never expecting to be called upon for a complete account of the case, had invented none, and he was not of the calibre to invent one on short notice.

"This cannot last, oh, this cannot last," he cried. He walked around all one morning in the Park—supposedly at the time searching for work and not finding it—and tried to choose a form of words in which to put an end to the dire situation. He bolted back to the flat

at noon, not yet having found any, but hoping it would come to him in the crisis itself.

Ardella was not there. She had left him a hasty scrawl, reading:

"I have prepared an agreeable surprise; we have a new address. Come and join me here when you can. It might be well to bring your trunk along, to save a second trip."

He hurried to the address given. It was not far away, but it was in a slum quarter, and was a tenement-house devoted to very poor working people. Ardella was sitting in a room that was at the same time parlor, dining-room, and kitchen, and had put up her travelling-clock and others of the same personal belongings she had brought from Thirty-fourth Street.

"Ardella! Ardella! what does this mean?" he exclaimed.

"You poor, dear boy," smiling winsomely; "this time I made all the arrangements myself; you had so much trouble before. Isn't it simple? Isn't it lovely? Here expense will be at a minimum. Don't you feel a great burden lifted from your shoulders already? This is our new home."

"Our new home," he repeated, in unmeasurable disgust. "She is mad; she is as mad as a hatter!"

"Yes, you have not seen it all yet," and she drew back a curtain, showing a small dark bed-room, in which a gas-jet was dimly burning.

"Have I ever said we were so poor that we must live in a slum?" he demanded fiercely.

"No, no, indeed, you never said it; you have been

very, very fine and noble about it all. When I have asked you, you carefully kept the details from me; but a woman's instinct divined what your good heart tried to conceal."

"And you mean to say we are to stay in a place like this?"

"Oh, no, only you. I shall return when I am out of work. I am going to find a position as janitress, or to wait in a bakery, or something of that kind. But this will be our headquarters; I will come back to you here, when they let me, and bring you my earnings."

She now showed signs of breaking down, as if hysterical with emotion. "We are going to be separated, Edwin," she cried, "but we—we—can write to each other. And I feel that it cannot, it must not, be for long. A brighter day will surely dawn upon us yet."

There was a familiar ring about this, his own words to her when they left Thirty-fourth Street. She copied, too, his stagy manner and gestures; the raillery could not be mistaken.

He rudely snatched away a handkerchief in which she hid her features, and, instead of tears, there were to be seen only a smiling face, her eyes bright with mocking laughter.

Thereupon she sank calmly into a chair, and made a pretty shrugging motion of her shoulders, that conveyed confession, and also a limitless defiance.

"So this infernal humbug, so your clever hoax, is over," roared Edwin in his rage. "I might have known any time in the last two weeks it was one."

"I beg your pardon, this 'infernal'——?" putting one hand to her ear as if she had not heard very well.

He stopped abashed, overwhelmed with the recollection of the past, and of apprehension for the future, which loomed up ominous and appalling.

"Let us get out of here and go and have a square meal at Delmonico's," was what he said next, suppressed animal nature first asserting itself.

"Very well," said Ardella, frigidly.

"I ought to have a better coat than this," said Edwin ruefully as they passed their late abode in East Sixteenth Street, "if we're going among people."

"You have only to go in and get one," said Ardella.

"How can I if they were all pawned with the furniture?"

"Nothing was pawned," returned Ardella, calmly laconic.

"And that hole of a place, the slum we have just left, didn't you really take that?"

"I did not take it; I borrowed it for the day, from some people I knew in our charity work? I sent them out on an excursion to Far Rockaway."

"Come, now, come, fair and honest, Ardella, what have you got to say—what do you think of a person that would deliberately carry on such—such a confounded imposture, such an unmitigated fraud?"

"Oh, really? I will merely ask, Who began it?"

"Yes, but I thought a woman—er—was supposed to be superior, to have higher moral ideals, and all that." So he tried to argue, but she gave him no facilities at all for arguing.

The meal together was taken under an armed truce. They returned to Thirty-fourth Street, and went away to the country still under the armed truce. An estrangement continues; but it has come to Edwin's knowledge that the object of Ardella's visit to Morristown, as mentioned, was to try and induce her grandfather to deed to him a valuable building lot there which the grandfather was willing to give her, Ardella. Her reasoning was that having always received everything from Edwin, she wanted to make him a tangible present, and this was probably her only way of ever doing so. The grandfather thought this a mere whim, but had finally given in to it.

Edwin held his knowledge over Ardella in high triumph.

"It conclusively shows you loved me," he argued. "Taken in connection with your most unselfish, plucky, and devoted conduct during all the first part of our apparent disaster, Ardella, it makes a demonstration that no rational person would think of denying."

"I deny it," rejoined Ardella—"And whatever, at most, it may show about the past, it shows nothing at all about the present or the future."

"I was madly in love with you," he pleads. "I felt so strongly my own unworthiness, and I wanted to secure a certainty though I knew I deserved none. Can you not try and think of my fault as one in the right direction at any rate?"

Then, he will frequently lavish upon her all sorts of the most devoted and flattering epithets. Whether these warm appeals will finally have their effect upon Ardella

remains to be seen. But what is certain is that Edwin Nickleton, of Greater New York, would have laid up a much greater treasure in her true affection if he had never indulged in this whimsical test experiment.

THE BRIC-A-BRAC MISSION

THE reasons why the Stanwick family were away from their abode, in the majestic Chimborazo Apartment House, that mild afternoon in early spring, were somewhat as follows: Mr. Stanwick was, of course, at his business at the Produce Exchange. Mrs. Stanwick had gone out with her second daughter, Grace, to pay a round of visits. The youngest daughter, Elizabeth, had gone to take a walk with her most intimate friend; they were pedestrianizing just at present, and their walk extended far up Madison Avenue. The son, Barnford, home for the holidays from his military school, the Pipeclay Cadets, had gone up to the Polo Ground to see a baseball match.

The eldest daughter, Victoria, had gone to confer with the Eugene Wickerlys concerning a painful occurrence that had happened to herself that morning. This was the only absence having really a momentous cause: in the painful occurrence referred to was bound up the fortune of an enterprise they in common had very much at heart.

Even the housemaid, Nora, had somehow got an afternoon off. There was no one left in the house but Johanna Keeley, the cook. Being in sole charge, with special injunctions to fidelity, it might have been supposed that Johanna would have guarded her employer's

interests with much attention. Instead of that, hardly was the coast clear when she herself sallied forth. Sarah, the servant of the opposite flat, was sweeping the hall.

"You'll kindly mind our bell while I'm out, won't you, Sarah, and give me any kyards that does be left?" she said.

"I wull," assented Sarah. "We hears your bell in our flat mostly every time it rings, the same as youz hear ours."

"It's a great favor you'll do me."

"It's no more than we ought, betune neighbors. Maybe I'll be askin' the same meself, one o' those days."

"Me young nevy, Johnny, 's come home, and I got but the wan chance to go over and pass the time o' day with him," the cook explained, adjusting a stiff, dull-hued, imitation India shawl, and hitching forward a very bright florid bonnet a little further over her brow.

"Aw, young Johnny's come home, is he? Where is he stoppin'?"

"Over at Doolan's big corner liquor-store, on First Avenya. Them Doolans is first cousins to the Colligans. You heard tell o' the Colligans?"

"I disremimber is it the Colligans or the Finnegans I heard tell of."

"They kep' a large coachyard in Lower Liffey Street, Dublin. But, howsomever, Johnny'll be goin' back the Sunda', and I must send a message wid him up to the whole bang o' them at the farrum."

"What farm is it, Mrs. Keeley?"

"It's a farrum that belonged to me husband's father, off up in the New Jarsee. His brothers, Michael and Thomas, and the sisters, Ellen and Ann, are all living on it. They won't have the daycincy to layve it be sold or divided, and me, out at service, is gittin' no part nor lot in it at all."

"Will you be long gone?" asked Sarah.

"I'll not let the grass grow under me feet," replied Johanna, taking this as a reminder to hasten. "Doolan's place is two mile o' ground out o' this, but I'll be back in an hour's time or the matter o' that. I musht take the Belt Line acrass and the Second Avenya kyar after, and I'll spake to the condooctors that they'd go quick."

"Look out none o' the family sees you," said the other, in playful warning, as the cook was off.

"I will that. If it was another time, maybe I wouldn't vinture it. That new benivolint society that Miss Victoria is goin' to so much—the 'Broky-Brick Mission,' they calls it—is near Doolan's place, almost over for-ninst it, indade. But I know she was there mostly all the mornin', and she never goes to it but the wance a day."

The painful episode to the eldest daughter of the family, as mentioned above, had in truth occurred there or thereabouts. Miss Victoria Stanwick was a comely young person, round, slender, and remarkably well made, to which she added the care to be beautifully dressed, generally, in a rather severe, distinguished taste. But, furthermore, she was a young woman of conscience,

with a capacity for earnest enthusiasms. The corners of her charming mouth, which remained a very kissable one all the same, turned prevailingly downward with a serious air, instead of upward with the smile of the coquette. She spread no wiles for men except such as she could not help. At least such was her intention, and if she had departed from it a little in the case of Hamilton Gregg, it was very difficult, at all events, to distinguish between undue use of feminine charm and what was legitimate persuasion permitted in a praiseworthy cause.

She was at present plunged heart and soul in the establishment of a new branch of the Bric-a-brac Mission, in an uptown district of New York, under the lead of the Eugene Wickerlys. I fancy the Eugene Wickerlys will be remembered, that couple who, with considerable money and an uneasy activity in search of occupation, have set more than one exceptional social enterprise on foot.

The object of the Bric-a-brac Mission was to place Douulton-ware pilgrim bottles, Capodimonte plates, majolica plaques, Limoges enamels, Flemish jugs, and in general artistic articles of highly correct and salutary form, in the homes of the benighted poor. Their ignorance on those subjects was something simply appalling. Victoria Stanwick would have talked to you by the hour about it, as she had talked at one time to Hamilton Gregg.

They did not often pretend to give originals, of course, the present state of their funds would not permit of it; but all the gifts were properly studied

after subtly elevating and refining models, of their best development respectively—the Middle Period, the Tertiary Period, or the Early Period, as the case might be. Now and then, however, in especially deserving cases, a real Dresden china cow or idol or shepherdess was given. An Apostle spoon had been known to administer surprising pabulum to the aspiration for a higher life, and very heavy afflictions had been solaced and reposed by the support of a Chippendale fiddle-back chair.

Victoria Stanwick had brought over Hamilton Gregg as a convert to the Mission, in great form. He subscribed to everything, went often to the rooms, and gave as much time as he could spare, from his employment in the bank, to distributing the æsthetic seed that was to spring up in such incalculable civilizing of life and character. When the time came for the grand dramatic entertainment for the benefit of the Mission, he took the principal part in the comedy—it was discovered that he had a great talent in that line—and he was also made stage-manager. Yet more, he was confidently counted on to bring in the aid of the morose Scadwin and his string quartette. The thing was almost settled. With the special attraction of Scadwin's lovely quartette, which hardly ever played for anybody, added to all the rest, there would be an entertainment certain to be memorable in the annals of such affairs, and, above all, certain to fill up the coffers of the society.

All had been going on beautifully, and the date of the great dramatic entertainment was but a week ahead, when suddenly, at the rooms of the Mission, Hamilton

Gregg set forth most remarkable and shameless pretensions.

These were nothing less than that Victoria should marry him, as a condition to his proceeding with any of the weighty features of the enterprise he had taken upon himself. She refused. You may see from here her painful embarrassment, but refuse she did, as she felt in duty bound.

"Oh, I am well punished for my folly! Oh, I suffer dearly for my senseless infatuation!" cried Hamilton Gregg, upon this, flying into a prodigious rage. "This is the price I have paid."

"You are not very complimentary. I do not see what price you have paid, nor to what you considered yourself so entitled," she responded, haughtily. "I took a warm interest in you—in having you see this matter, the Mission, in a way which would be an advantage to you as well as to others—that is all. But I do not wish to marry you."

"You are utterly inconsistent," he exclaimed. "Does this accord with your confidential treatment of me? the many exceptional marks of favor you have shown me? Am I a person likely to make such a mistake?"

"Women do not have to be consistent," she said, in a curt way, for she was beginning to grow impatient under his wearisome persistency.

It cannot be said that the revelation had taken her entirely by surprise; she had dreaded something of the kind for quite a while, and only hoped that the evil day might be put off till after the eventful affair that was coming. But now that the crisis was fairly upon

her and could not be escaped, when the sweet postponements and diplomatic delays of which she had availed herself were of no further use, there was a certain relief in the frank explanation. She had feared of late that her poor, perishable, human attractiveness had had some share in leading him on to the things of the higher æsthetic life and to a philanthropic regeneration.

"Even if so," she argued mentally, "ought I not simply to be grateful to have been found worthy to serve as a humble handmaid of Art? And should he feel any mere trifling temporal disappointment or uneasiness connected with the matter, ought I, having done him so great a service, in the widening and ennobling of his nature, really to concern myself about it?"

She had once even gone so far as to say that she would never marry any man who would not, the opportunity being open, join such a commendable work as the Bric-a-brac Mission. Gregg had joined it at once, and seemed to consider this as a sort of promise personal to himself.

In spite of her attempted self-justification, her conscience pricked her, and she was glad to tell him openly, before he had completed the services on which he now set such an exaggerated price, that she could by no means be his. At the same time she secretly hoped that he would not maintain any such preposterous exactions.

"You confound two questions in which I cannot see the least possible connection," she said to him. "What difference could my marrying you make as to your duty to benefit yourself and the world, by aiding the Bric-a-brac Mission?"

"What is the good of it, anyway?" he asked, sacrilegiously. "If you want to help any of those people, why don't you give them a square meal or a suit of clothes, instead?"

"You don't believe in it? You doubt the inestimable value of the Bric-a-brac Mission?" she cried, shocked. "Have I got to go all over it again? How many times have I told you that there are too many soup-kitchens, 'refuges,' coal, and clothing supplies, and all that sort of thing? In these days we've got to find some kind of charity that doesn't cause more demoralization than good. The social classes don't owe to each other as much as used ignorantly to be taught. If you don't want to have flies, don't leave the things around that breed them. You haven't any right to discourage honest industry and increase indolence and improvidence, by indiscriminate alms-giving. This is the latest scientific discovery. Now *we* have found something different. Of course, I can't explain it all to you as clearly as Mr. Eugene Wikerly could. If you would only see him——"

"Was I the kind of a person to be contented with 'the latest scientific discovery,' with a cold æsthetic ideal, when you are always here before my eyes, lovely, radiant, enchanting? Look at me! I am wasting to a shadow. You are never out of my mind, day or night. My friends don't know what to make of it; they think me half mad. Now, look here, only marry me and I'll do anything under the sun to please you, no matter what. We'll carry on bric-a-brac missions all over the world. We'll send out Empire cabinets and casts from

the Parthenon to the natives of Timbuctoo, if you like, and Whistler's etchings and subscriptions for all the magazines to Fijee and Thibet."

She was softened a little by the vigor of his admiration, but hardened again at the imprudence of this unregenerate scoffing.

"I am very sorry, but it cannot be," she said, in a demure finality.

"Then let this wretched mockery cease. Here I stop short; here I stand firm. Understand it well: I will have nothing further to do with any of these matters that are going on. No more rehearsals, no more stage-managing for me. You must look out for somebody else to take my place. I wash my hands of the dramatic entertainment and of the society in every way, shape, and form."

He had expected that his ultimatum would be terrible, and it was. She was quite crushed by the blow.

"Oh, Hamilton! I mean, oh, Mr. Gregg!" she murmured, "this is dreadful, dreadful."

Perhaps there are dramatic entertainments that can spare the leading character from their comedy just at the last moment; perhaps there are others that can spare their stage manager; but to have them both swept away at one fell swoop, almost in the face of the audience—and that, too, with dread of still more defections coming—how suppose such a calamity can ever be survived?

"And the Bric-a-brac Mission is so badly in need of every new recruit, of every grain of encouragement and influence," she added, piteously.

"The Bric-a-brac Mission be hanged!" he replied, with savage emphasis.

"But you will at least see that we have Scadwin? You are the only friend of his who can persuade him. You'll see that we have Scadwin's quartette, all the same, won't you?" she suggested, timidly.

He gave a sort of indignant snort. "Not if I know it. Not if I can help it," he said.

"Oh, this is too dreadful, dreadful," she murmured anew.

"I shall return everything that belongs to you, and try to forget that you ever existed," he went on, with increasing fury. "I shall send back your letters——"

"You may keep them, if you like," she interposed, in mild parenthesis; "I am sure there is nothing—there is ——" And they were in fact quite noncommittal.

"I shall send back your photograph, which has blessed my eyes; it was enshrined on my holiest altar. By the first mail, too, you will receive my rôle copied out from that wretched comedy. Give it now to some other poor dupe. Comedy, indeed? ha! ha! what tragedy could half express what I feel?"

Victoria could only bow her head under the storm. They parted in silence, a few blocks away from the new branch rooms of the Mission.

Such was the fatal interview. In the afternoon the agitated Victoria, hastening to the Wickerlys to see what could be done to stave off the disastrous consequences to the Mission, did not find the wise mentor, Eugene, at home. She found only Mrs. Eugene. Yet this was perhaps better, for it was a delicate affair,

about which she felt she could talk to Mrs. Wickerly alone with the greater freedom.

"An' how is young Johnny?" queried Sarah of Johanna, the cook, on the latter's return to the Chimborazo Flat.

"Bright and brishk. Was anny wan here for me since?"

Sarah handed out the cards of a couple of ladies who had called.

"Rayde me the names of them, Sarah, me jewel."

The other did so.

"That's a sort we don't have a great lot to do with, them two. They'll not show their faces in another six months or a year, so there'll be no betrayalment be them."

"You met with nothin' disquietin' to you when you were out, Mrs. Keeley?"

"Faix I had wan close call, that gev me a bit of a fright; howsomdever it didn't signify."

"What was it, Johanna?"

"I told you already how the rooms o' the Brickybroke Mission was near Doolan's place, over forninst—Doolan's custhomers sez that the singin' and discoursin' do be that bad, out o' the windys of it, sometimes, that they're near callin' the police—Well, me dear, what wid bein' in haste when I left Doolan's sure I quite forgot to mind me eye about that place and shlip round the other corner. I was passin' by it, when a young felly comes down the steps, wan that I see here be times, callin' for Miss Victoria. He had a long-

lookin', solemn face on him, and a kind of a packet in his hand. 'You are the cook at Misther Stanwick's, are you not?' says he. I was struck spacheless; I cudn't say a word. 'Give this, wid me complemints, to Miss Victoria,' says he, handin' his packet out at me. I put me two hands behind me back, for you'll aisy see I cudn't take errands on a trip o' the kind. 'Well, you are a servant at Misther Stanwick's, are you not?' says he again. 'I *am* not,' says I, very brazen, 'nor ever was.' Wid that he layves me alone, and I goes off, wid me tongue in me cheek. The moony, wandtherin' gossoon! —Me on'y chance was to deny it, do ye see?"

"I was near forgettin' that the postman was here, too, with a letter," said Sarah, as the stout cook, with bonnet-strings already loosened, was entering at her own door.

"A letther? and where is it?"

"He wouldn't leave it to me. It was one o' them registered letters, that has to get a recayte signed for it in a book. He rung yeer bell twict and was grumblin' and growlin' that there was no one to answer him."

"Oh-a, my! a letther! that's bad; may be they'd hear o' that. Why didn't you get it off him, Sarah dear?"

"Sure I coaxed him hard to give it me. 'I wouldn't give it you if you was twenty times as mealy-mouthed as you are,' he says. 'Only them'll get it as it belongs to,' and then off with him down the stairs—The polite manners some of them postmen do have!"

"Who does them registhered letthers mostly be for, Sarah?"

"For the masther. They has money and things o' great valya in them. He'll bring it back."

When the Stanwick family returned Johanna made her report. The cards were treated with small consideration, as she had foreseen.

"How was Miss Crawbill dressed?" demanded the second daughter, Grace, disdainfully.

"She—she had a kind av a lighty dark shuit on her, wid a shtreaky stripey look," answered Johanna, hesitating a little at first, but then going ahead stoutly with her imaginationings.

"Was there anything else?"

"There was a letther," Johanna confessed, for she was alarmed about that. She fancied there was danger of the loss of it, and that it might be necessary for some one to go in search of it.

"And where is it?"

"It was one of them registhered letthers, that does have money and things o' great valya in them, and he wouldn't layve it to me."

"How annoying!" was the general exclamation.

"The worst of it is," added buxom Mrs. Stanwick, "that when they take a letter away like that, they are not always in a hurry to bring it back again. It may not come by this evening's delivery, and perhaps not even by the first one in the morning. Couldn't you have managed to get it from him, Johanna?"

"I shtruggled hard wid him. 'You know me character,' I says. 'I cud give you rufferincis to the highest in the land,' I says to him. He shwore he'd giv it to

none but them it was comin' to, afther they'd sign for it in his book. 'Do you think I'd shtear it?' I asks him. 'That's nayther here nor there; ye'll not have it,' says he to me."

"Oh, Johanna," said young Elizabeth, casually, "I thought I saw you in a Belt Line car, on Fifty-ninth Street, as we were going up Madison Avenue. Were you out? It was exactly like that bright bonnet of yours—though I had no smoked glass to look at it through."

"Is it me?" her ruddy cheek taking a flush several degrees deeper, "wid all I had to do in the kitchen?" Then, in greater indignation, "The wan that made me that bonnet has made the same patthorn since for the half o' New York. I'll give her a piece o' me mind."

"Stop, hush, Lizzie!—She likes to tease," said the mother of the household. "But whom was the letter for? The postman at least told you that."

"He did," responded Johanna. She was spurred on by the dangerous touch of suspicion she had just escaped, to give her position all the veri-similitude possible. She embroidered her narrative with details that in a less flustered mood she herself might have seen to be needless. "'For the masther, and it's of great valya entirely,' he says, 'and I got me ordthers to howld it fasht till I see him.' And what's more, didn't I see the name av Stanwick—Hirum B. Stanwick, Exquare—in the big writin' on the envelliyoep, forninst me eyes?"

"Do you know I sometimes think you don't read writing very well, Johanna," said Victoria, regarding her critically.

"Oh-a, then, do you mind that, now?" raising her arms in a protesting way. "Isn't it me that does give yez yeer letthers, every wan the right letther that's comin' to him, whin Nora's out and it's me turn to open the doore?"

It is true that she did this, but the times when it was demanded were very rare, and the *tour de force* was performed with the aid of the postman. She made it a point of pride to get the letters placed in her hand by him in a certain order, not easily disarranged. In other ways, too, she took infinite pains to keep up the delusion—though ambition had never induced her to make an effort to learn a single character, either of script or print.

The idea of the mysterious registered letter began to ferment in the imaginations of all, and to give rise to a great variety of speculations.

"You don't expect any money letters or anything of that kind here, do you, papa?" asked Grace. "They would go to your office. Much more likely to be the present Uncle Jordan was going to send me, about Easter-time, for a new dress." Without stopping for an answer, she hurried to a rich red cherry-wood desk of her own, took out a piece of correspondence, came back, and showed it to Johanna as a specimen. "There, wasn't the handwriting something like this? Don't you think it was the same as this?" she asked.

"It was pretty much that-a-way; sure it's very like," returned Johanna, with an amiable wish to please.

"But she said the postman said it was for papa," objected Victoria.

"He might have sent it in papa's name."

"It may be Flamson that's paid up at last," suggested Mr. Stanwick to his wife. "It would be like him to send it to the house instead of the office, to make more of an impression on the family."

A considerable loan had been made to Flamson on the score of personal friendship. There was really little prospect of getting it back, but Flamson was a very plausible person, and he had been promising anew of late.

"If Flamson *should* pay up, we'll have the house at Rye," said Mrs. Stanwick. "I have thought, too," meditatively, "it may be the interest on my toll-bridge stock, sent in a little earlier than usual."

"I think it's the belated dues from our Winter Night Cotillion, that are coming in to me as treasurer," put in Elizabeth, vivaciously. "There were three that Belle Mason promised to get for me before she went to Albany, and I guess she'll forward them from there. Wasn't it post-marked Albany, Johanna? and wasn't the writing all sloped this way"—drawing an imaginary copy in the air—"with a tremendous thick splash crossing all the t's? She writes an awfully large, bold hand, Belle does."

"Troth, I wouldn't wonder if it was. I belayve it was quite resimblin' to that," assented the domestic, raising her hand to her cheek in a dazed way.

"Let Johanna go back to her kitchen; we shall never have dinner to-night," interposed Mrs. Stanwick at this point, with authority.

Barnford, the school-boy son, drew his sister Eliza-

beth aside into the hall at the first opportunity, and said to her: "They're not onto it at all, Liz. I can give you the true inwardness of this thing in two minutes."

"You can?"

"It's like this. That letter is a report from old Grimson, the principal, about my conduct up at the Pipe-Clay Cadets, last term. I've been waiting for it. Things weren't altogether lovely up there. I just give you the tip, you know. They probably send the letters registered so as to keep 'em from falling into a fellow's hands."

"Bad boy! aren't you ashamed to tell me this?"

"Of course I am, but that isn't the proposition just now. What you and I have got to do, Liz, is to keep on the *qui vive* for that same letter when it comes back. We'll plunge out into the hall first, freeze onto it, one or the other of us, take it to the grate or a window, to notice who it's for, see? and then all of a sudden some accident will happen to it."

"Horrid boy!"

"I'll do as much for you some time, Liz."

Miss Victoria presently followed Johanna even to her kitchen, and addressing her in her sincere, earnest way.

"Tell me truthfully," said she, "are you sure it was not a package of about this general size and form?" exhibiting a roll which was what the copied dramatic part of Hamilton Gregg would have looked like, if sent by mail. "And wasn't there more than one package, Johanna? Wasn't there one that resembled a tied-up

bundle of letters? and then another, perhaps, that might have been a photograph—imperial size?”

“It’s you, then, that’s in the right of it, Miss Victorya, darlin’,” cried the cook, beaming with benevolent brightness, and so anxious to stand well with all the world that she had quite forgotten her previous protestations. “Them was the very self-same, and they all covered over criss-cross wid big red sayles and poshty-stamps.”

“Then what did you mean by saying the letter-carrier said it was for papa? How could it have been for papa?”

“That’s what I axes mesilf too, Miss Victorya,” responded the kitchen dame, flustered, yet not very much, at being brought up with this round turn.

It was evident that nothing conclusive could be got out of Johanna. The only thing certain was that there was a registered letter for *some* member of the family, and there was nothing to be done but to wait patiently for it till the postman should make his reappearance. Miss Victoria, and even various of the others, slept much less than common that night, and in the long interval each personage saw the probabilities in his own case with a more favorable eye, and strengthened himself in his theory. Mrs. Stanwick took time by the forelock, and already wrote to get further particulars about the house at Rye, to be bought with Flamson’s money. Miss Grace took down some samples from which she should select her new dress with Uncle Jordan’s remittance. Barnford and Elizabeth practised the drill they meant to use in their confiscation proj-

ect. Miss Victoria, starting out immediately after dinner, spent a large part of the evening in driving round, to find another stage-manager and leading character for a comedy. She returned late, in darkly-deepening despair, success was all but impossible. And then, too, Scadwin's Quartette?

As a matter of course, because he was so eagerly expected, the postman had to be very much later than usual next morning. Mr. Stanwick delayed his going down town, to receive him. While they were all waiting, there was a sharp nervous ring. A false alarm. It was Hamilton Gregg, exceedingly early, to be sure, for a visit. He caught sight of Victoria.

"I wanted to catch you before you went out," he gasped. "I have *not* come to ask you again. I—I——"

She drew him into a little reception-room, at the left of the hall. His expression was to her most enigmatic. If he had sent back the rôle and other papers, as he had threatened, then this preamble and his severe look probably meant further reproaches, perhaps even menaces, an aggravated form of the painful scene. If he had *not* sent them back, perhaps he had relented. If she only knew, she could know just how to take him.

He had got only so far as to open his mouth, as one might say, without a word having yet issued from it, when really the postman's ring, accompanied by a shrill whistle, was heard. The front door was thrown wide by Barnford, who was on the watch, and incredibly outstripped the maid, Nora. It proved to be not the regular man, but a carrier on special service.

But the clasp of his satchel provokingly stuck fast,

and he could not get his letters out immediately. The persons waiting with attentive ear in the several rooms had time to grow impatient and sally forth. The whole family gathered round. Victoria watched from the sill of the reception-room, Hamilton Gregg looking out behind her. Nora hurried to the region of the kitchen for a chisel or other implement, to aid, but came back without it. Johanna Keeley followed immediately after, wiping her arms upon her apron, and produced the chisel. She was retiring along the hall again, as lingeringly as possible, to give her curiosity some chance of gratification, when the postman, bursting open his satchel, roared in a stentorian voice, to make up for lost time.

"Mrs. Johanna Keeley!"

"What's wanted?" asked that personage, turning around.

He was waving a letter in the air.

"Registered letter, Mrs. Johanna Keeley! Anyone answer to that name? Quick now, lady, if it's you!"

"Is it for me? Go away wid you, or I'll hit you wan wid de umbrell," reaching vaguely toward the hat rack for that weapon.

"Mrs. Johanna Keeley, that's plain enough, ain't it? Sign here, please," imperturbably.

Young Barnford, in a high state of glee at his own escape, was the first to grasp the situation. Hurrying forward, he signed the book for her.

Johanna looked at first as if she were going down with a stroke of apoplexy. "Here's some mishtake," she said, recovering herself, with portentous gravity.

"Take it you, Sor. Howly powers, but it's makin' game o' me he is."

She handed it to Mr. Stanwick, who ran his eye hastily over it, reading aloud certain salient words. It's from a lawyer. 'Deceased husband's estate. Brothers Michael and Thomas, and sisters Ellen and Ann. Take notice,' et cetera, et cetera. A sale is ordered of some piece of property. It's for you, yourself, Johanna. Now, what the devil has been the meaning of all this nonsense?"

"And you *haven't* sent back your part in the play then?" said Victoria Stanwick, turning upon Hamilton Gregg with a highly assured manner, a welcome sense of relief. She knew now how to deal with him.

"Sent it back? no, indeed, no, indeed. Once I was going to, you know; it gives me a cold chill to think of it. No, no, I spoke in haste. I've come back to ask for pardon. Try me again. I only want——"

"They'll layve the farrum be sold! They'll layve the farrum out in the New Jarsee be sold and divided! Now the blissin' o' the saints be on all them this day!" they heard Johanna exclaim, in momentary forgetfulness of her embarrassing position.

"Listen to me, I say, Johanna!" exclaimed Mrs. Stanwick, with indignantly swelling breast; "why did you invent all these imaginary conversations, this great tissue of lies? And you," recapturing the letter-carrier with her gesture through a crack in the door, just as it was closing behind him, "a complaint ought to be lodged against you at the Post-office. What reason had you for not giving her the letter yesterday, when you

were here, instead of coming back to create all this disturbance?"

"Complaint against me? No, marm, I guess not. I couldn't very well give it to her when there wasn't nobody in the house. I rang your bell-pull most off. Ask the gal over the way, if you don't believe me."

"You were out of the house, Johanna," exclaimed Elizabeth, coming and standing before her vivaciously, with youthful, accusing eyes. "Then I *did* see you in the Fifty-ninth street car? I was sure of it."

The accused thought it the best policy to resist identification. She denied it strenuously up and down.

"You'll remember meeting *me*, though," said Mr. Gregg, "over First Avenue way." He had stepped out into the scene of excitement with the rest. "I offered you a manuscript to deliver here, you will recollect. You didn't seem to be exactly on your way home just then."

Upon this Johanna finally collapsed, unable to hold out against such an overwhelming weight of testimony.

"Yes, you're that same long-faced, glumpy-lookin' man," she muttered, sullenly; "well, Miss Victorya won't get much good wid *you*."

"Oh, I was on the very point of sending the packet, but thought better of it then and there," said Gregg, drawing back to Victoria's side, to help cover her confusion at this speech. "I thought what a brute I'd been, and fully realized the enormity of it all and what I was going to lose."

"And you still think better of it? You are going to be reasonable?"

"I've separated the two questions completely. Just put me to some practical use, that's all I ask. I'd rather have the little finger of your friendship than the whole of any other woman's love."

Victoria found this rather well put. Since he no longer insisted or claimed anything, she was much more inclined to an amiable yielding. And in truth, in her conference with Mrs. Eugene Wickerly, that lady had argued that it might not be at all a bad thing, if the worst came to the worst, to save the dramatic entertainment on Hamilton Gregg's own terms. She had shown him to be an excellent match, and had said a quantity of very nice things about him.

"Me nevy, young Johnny, at Doolan's, and me not go and see him?" grumbled Johanna aloud, as she went back to her kitchen. "I suppose yeez 'ud have me neglect me own flesh and blood. That's the kind of char'ty yeez do have for the poor."

Luncheon that day was not a distinguished success, and dinner was a total wreck. Turkey legs came up sticking out from the midst of the blue-fish. Next morning Johanna left this excellent place in ignominy, somewhat consoled, however, no doubt, by her share of the inheritance in the New Jersey farm.

And, speaking of financial matters, the receipts from the dramatic entertainment for the Bric-a-brac Mission, with the kind assistance of Scadwin's Quartette, were nearly enough to put a Macramé lace lambrequin in every East Side tenement-house from Kip's Bay to the Harlem Flats.

THE LAST OF THE FAIRY WANDS

"THE good old fairy stories, which we have got over believing in, but of which we still like to hear the pleasant rhythmic movement—those traditional fairy stories all agree in a certain thing: the wonderful changes produced by the aid of a magic wand. Thus, for example, in 'Cinderella,' the good fairy touches with her wand the shabby dress of the little kitchen-maid, and it is changed into a lovely ball-costume; she touches the pumpkin and it becomes a splendid carriage. In the 'Sleeping Beauty' the fairy touches all the moving things in the palace and they go to sleep, not to wake up till the end of the hundred years, and she touches the shrubbery and it becomes a thicket, so close that nothing can get through it to interrupt the sleep of the Princess." Thus, in passing, reflected young Mrs. Tilbury, who had been reading to her elder son the two above-named stories. Have I yet said that she was a charming mother, most attractive in her looks and lively and genial in her ways? No? Then it is a good place to say it here and now. This elder son, too, although he had a rather long name, Jefferson Tilbury, was a nice little chap, only five his last birthday; while a younger son, "Russy," or Russell, was but two and a half.

Mrs. Tilbury, then, had been reading those stories

to her boy, probably for the twentieth time, when all at once, that morning, the "wand" idea seemed to take hold of him too in an uncommonly forcible and also practical way. If wands were a good thing for fairies, why not a good thing for him? And he said:

"Oh, mamma dear, I wish *we* had a fairy wand."

"So do I," responded his mother genially; "what lots of nice things we would do with it."

Then they commenced to plan some of the things they would do. It would bring "Jeffy" an indefinite number of new toys and some extraordinary changes in his old ones. His mother said she would touch the large rug in the dining-room, which was pretty well worn, and have that renewed; and the same with the curtains in her bedroom. And she would have for herself the antique Willard clock, down at Swanzig's store. All this for her birthday, which was quite close at hand.

"And then—what have we been thinking of, Jeffy?" she continued, "we would get some nice new clothes the very first thing for those poor little McSwale boys that come to see Rose, the nurse, would we not? and some coal for their mother. Things take such a lot of money, you know, and we don't always have enough for everything. And we must not forget papa. We would touch that battered old dictionary of his that he doesn't care about, and get him the set of Macaulay's Works he is so anxious for."

After reflecting awhile, "Will you get me a fairy wand, mamma?" asked Jeffy, his sweet little face blushing shyly.

"I'll see about it," said his mother, smiling at the

quaint idea and attaching at the time no importance to it.

"Do they sell them at Whoopley's?" he pursued, earnestly. "I guess they do."

"Perhaps they do. It's a very large store, and I suppose they would be as likely to have them there as anywhere," she replied, in that putting-off way that parents have with their children. She was one of those who said she did not believe in dispelling the pleasant illusions of childhood any earlier than necessary. His little notion, so seriously entertained, made her smile anew at its comicality, and then she dismissed it from mind.

Now, as children know, there is a great deal of hope in that vague answer, "I'll see about it." Sometimes something comes of it, and then again does not, but, at any rate, it is a thousand times better than a square refusal. Yet, at the best, it is apt to mean long delay, and Jefferson Tilbury was a person very much averse to waiting.

That afternoon, therefore, when his mother had gone out to make some visits, he managed to slip away from Rose, the nurse-girl, who had him and "Russy" in charge. He shortly appeared within the portal of the great department store of Whoopleys, proudly carrying his savings-bank in hand. A great bustle of the usual shopping people was passing in and out of the entrance and the swinging doors clapped together behind them. The charming blonde head of Jeffy, and his sturdy small figure at once drew much attention. He was rather embarrassed at all the movement about

him, yet wore upon his face a frank smile, full of anticipation. The majestic floor-walker bent down to learn his errand.

"I want a fairy wan'," said Jeffy.

The floor-walker had the request repeated several times over, but in vain.

"I want to change some things for mamma's birthday day. I want a wan'," said Jeffy.

The grand floor-walker could make nothing of it, but by no means on that account gave himself up defeated. Waving the child onward, after the impressive manner of floor-walkers, he called down the aisle, "Show the gentleman—the—the—*o-on-g* department," and then turned away to pilot gallantly a stout lady who was inquiring for furniture and looked prosperous enough to buy out half the stock.

They took Jeffy into the music department, close by, under the impression, from the chief's order, that he might want something like a popular ballad. They had them all there, marked down to the lowest prices. He came out dissatisfied, and repeated his demand for a "wand" to several employees in the main aisle, and to some passing customers.

"Candy?" suggested a young salesgirl, emerging from behind the bargain counter devoted that day to remnants of silk.

Jeffy's face beamed upon this; candy was, apparently, always in order, and he could pursue his more serious mission afterward. He was led to the soda-water counter, where he sipped down a large glass of strawberry; then he ranged up alongside the confec-

tionery counter and selected, with much deliberation, enough of its contents to make a good-sized packet. It is probable that, in the innocence of his heart, he thought these were being conferred upon him out of pure hospitality, used as he was to being very kindly treated on all sides. But the attendant took his savings-bank in a business-like way and rattled out of it the amount of his purchases. The entire capital of the bank, thus disclosed to view, was seen to consist of a silver quarter, given for not waking up papa too early in the morning by unseemly hubbub, two ten-cent pieces, earned at the rate of two cents per day for neatness in dressing, several nickels, and lastly a couple of flat buttons, slipped in by "Russy," who had most incorrect notions on the subject of finance and banking.

This being over, his uncertainties and wanderings began anew. "Up in the alligator," he said, pointing to the elevator, as he saw it slip by mysteriously in its metal cage. A cash-girl, going that way, took him along, but she soon brought him back again, apparently without matters being cleared up at all.

She was dressed in a dark pinafore and was actively chewing gum.

"What's yer name? Where d'yer live?" she asked. He would not answer such commonplace questions.

"Who's yer father? and what does he do?" she went on in the same blunt line of inquiry.

Though these queries seemed no more relevant than the former, to the matter of finding a fairy-wand on sale, Jeffy chose to reply to them. He said his father

was a *perseffer* in the Sign-Ticket School—and went to *factory-meetin's*, every Monday night.

“Aw, a professor, in the Scientific School, is he? and he goes to—what?” The “faculty meetings,” he intended to say, were beyond her ken. “Well, yuh better run home; I guess yer mommer wants yuh.”

“Aw, he’s no good; I dunno what he’s talkin’ about,” she continued, turning him over to a grown-up sister at the glove-counter. “Here, you take him, Mame. I got to hurry back with me change.”

But this young woman seemed to recollect him. “I think I’ve seen him in here before,” said she to an attendant at the stationery-counter. “Yes, it’s the little blonde boy that was here once, with his mother. He lay down on the floor, in the middle of the people, and kicked and screamed, ’cause he didn’t want to go home; and she didn’t know what to do with him.”

“My! I hope he won’t do that now,” responded the stationery-lady, half alarmed. Inspired by a happy thought, she came around from behind her counter in turn and queried, “Toys?—a drum?—a gun?—Want the toy department?”

This was an idea, again, that Jeffy accepted with alacrity; it was both interesting in itself, and might lead to something else. With his guide he got into the “alligator,” which went down, it seemed, as well as up, and they descended to the toy department in the vast basement.

He had a wide space here to wander over, and he made the most of it, searching as he went. His eyes rested lingeringly on the whips, on the base-ball bats,

on the golf-sticks and hockey-sticks, but the resemblance was really very slight in all these to what he wanted.

By some chance his glance caught a patent gas-lighter, at the edge of the house-furnishing department. This seemed, at last, to exactly meet his wishes and fill the bill. It was a long, metallic holder, with a taper, or a jet of spirit-flame, at one end, kept burning for the proper display of the device to customers. The fairies' wands generally had a star at the end, but there were some, too, according to the pictures, that seemed to end in a little flame. Hence, Jeffy argued, if any wands were kept for sale at Whoopley's, it must be these.

He seized it, said he would buy it, and produced his savings-bank for the payment. The salesman, examining the ticket, found that the price was \$1.29, whereas the small bank now contained less than forty cents. He also had misgivings about entering into business dealings to any such extent with so small a child; and he refused the article. But Jeffy was set upon it, clung to it with both hands, and burst into tears when an attempt was made to take it away from him. A very lively scene was in prospect, and then a deliverer appeared.

This was an acquaintance, a Miss Alicia Page, who was a bright, imperious young woman, a great admirer of the family, and particularly of his mother, with whom she had been a schoolmate at Smith College. Fresh and blooming from a rapid walk in the sharp wintry air, she had come in to make a few purchases, and found herself in that part of the store by the merest accident.

"Why, Jeffy," she exclaimed, "what is the matter? Why, you poor little thing, what are you doing here?"

She drew him along with her, the salespeople letting them take the gas-lighter away, upon a significant nod from her, and she found out a quiet place in the shoe department, where they sat down on a comfortable bench.

"Why do you want the gas-lighter, little sweetheart?" she asked. "Such things are only for grown people; you couldn't have any fun with it. And it is dangerous and might burn up everything."

Her persistent treatment of it as a gas-lighter, and not as a wand, weakened his confidence, and he was already half willing to abandon it. She had as much difficulty in understanding him and his plan as had the floor-walker and the others, but presently it broke in upon her. He had come to buy a magic wand, such as they used in "Cinjerella" and the "Sleepy Beauty," so as he "could touch lots of things and turn them into other things."

"And what would you like to touch, and change into other things?"

"My broked lead soldiers; then I'd have 'bout a hundred more French and Crushems [Alicia knew he meant Russians], and my wooden horse and fix his lost-off head. And I'd have some preserved squinches [quinces], and some clome [cologne] on my handkerchief, and cure Russy if he gets the hoofin'-cough, and some new clothes for Jimmie McSwale."

"Yes, those poor McSwale children; something really ought to be done for them," murmured Alicia.

"And that awful nice clock what mamma wants for her birthday day, at—with"—he seemed very uncertain on that point—"Swansin'."

"Oh, your mother would like that Willard clock down at Swanzig's, would she?" She made shrewd mental note of this; she particularly wanted to give Mrs. Tilbury a pleasing present this year; so there was *one* point settled.

She entered into Jeffy's design with a zest. "I will help you, I will see what I can do," said she. "Just wait for me here, honey; don't stir from this bench; I'll be back in a minute."

Hurrying here and there in the great store, she succeeded in getting a slim rod, colored blue, from which she had a small American flag removed for her purpose. Then she found a bright tinsel star of the kind used in the decoration of Christmas-trees. She had the star fastened to the end of the stick, with a long tack, and with this quickly improvised wand, returned to her young friend.

Jeffy's eyes fairly sparkled with delight when he saw it, and an adorable smile overspread his countenance. Yes, that seemed to be the real thing; it was exactly the way the fairies had them, in the books. He took the star-tipped wand and walked home beside her, looking up at times into her face with the greatest pride and content.

It so happened that just as he entered the gate the little McSwale's were coming out from a visit to Rose—who was not at home, being engaged in an affrighted

chase all over the neighborhood for himself, her missing charge.

Jeffy slipped up behind Jimmy McSwale, to see at once how the wand was going to work. He picked out the most ragged places in his clothing, and touched them stealthily. But Jimmy McSwale wheeled around—thinking himself attacked and that a fencing match was in order since this was a favorite part of Jeffy's fun—caught up a small tree-branch he found and affected to cross swords in military fashion. They cut and thrust towards each other with great vigor, but then McSwale, though twice Jeffy's age, made believe to be hard pressed, and ran and vaulted over the low fence. Next reaching back, he lifted over his brother, Johnny McSwale, after him, and the two were off so quick that in their rapid flight you could not see whether the magic touches had changed the appearance of their clothing or not.

As soon as he was within the house Jeffy made straight for the dining-room, and tapped the wand upon the well-worn rug, then upon the large, old dictionary; then he gave a light touch with it to his small dog "Peter," whom he wanted to turn into a fine mastiff, like the Scatterbury's. But quite before the effect could be observed in these cases either, his mother had imperatively summoned him up-stairs to her sitting-room, with Alicia. She wanted to know what he had been doing and where they were arriving from together, after his alarming absence.

Alicia, with much exchange of significant smiling, told the story. They had to express themselves in French

and German and other mysterious ways, the best they could, so the little fellow would not know it was all about him. Meanwhile he made repeated dives at the curtains his mother had said she wanted to replace, and tapped them actively with his wand. Not being hurried now, he had plenty of time to observe the effect; his exclamations of discontent and grief were so loud as to interrupt the conversation.

"Mamma, I've hit 'em, and then I've hit 'em another again," said he, "and they don't do nuffin; they only change to stay just the same way."

His mother called him to her, and covered him with kisses, of which he could not know the prompting cause.

"O dear! so they don't," said she, and as in dreamy reflection. "Well, I don't know—let *me* try it—perhaps it takes a longer time—they may not change exactly on the instant. The story does not say, does it? that Cinderella's kitchen-dress was turned into a ball-gown the instant it was touched. It was probably ready in time for the ball, or it may all have been done two or three days beforehand."

"It's a shame," protested Alicia. "*Il faut absolument lui dire.*" That's the way they said in their French, "We really ought to tell him."

But they did not; they would do nothing yet to undeceive the dear little chap who had such confidence in his story-books. So far from it, indeed, that his mother went on:

"They may not make them as well now as they used to in old times; so they may be a good deal slower to

act. Most things now are made by machines, you know, and the hand-made things were better."

"Oh," said the boy, beginning to see a ray of consolation.

"I should say it was a perfectly good wand, Jeffy," she went on, taking it in her hand, "and a great deal may come of it yet."

Thus comforted and reconciled to delay, Jeffy gave his wand plenty to do. In the next week or ten days, and especially as the novelty wore off, it got such active employment that the star had to be replaced twice, and even then had a very lopsided look, and the stick was broken and had to be tied together with twine. It had the aspect of a wand that some wicked fairies might have got hold of and vented their spite upon.

And now what do you think? In reality the wand proved a most marvellous one. So strange and magical were its doings that we ought to send an account to the Society for Psychical Research.

It did the most remarkable things. Not later than mamma's birthday—besides Jeffy's toy-closet being filled up in an overflowing way—and although there was no new range in the kitchen (but only a set of new fire-bricks, which made the old one go ever so much better) and although papa had to wait for his edition of Macaulay till his own birthday, several months off, still there appeared in the dining-room, on that very day, mind you! a new rug, a beauty! And the new bedroom curtains were equally fine. Mamma got the Willard clock she had sighed for, from Swanzig's. The McSwale boys appeared, Johnny in such shiny shoes as

made your eyes twinkle, and Jimmy in the best suit of clothes he had ever had in his life,—the effect of which latter was so good that it shortly got him a place as an errand boy in a large business house.

And who shall say that they will not all live happy ever after?

INSECTS I HAVE MET

I HAVE met the wasp, the mosquito, the midge, the wicked flea, the black fly of the woods, and the common house-fly, I have met the katydid, the lightning-bug and the water-bug. I once contended with some ants, who would carry off the grass-seed from a lawn as fast as you could plant it, and in boyhood I went many a half mile out of my course to avoid the devil's darning-needle, or dragon-fly, who, it was well known, would sew up your ears if you gave him a chance.

The small caterpillar is known to me, who swings from the elmtree on a cobweb, and catches you under the nose as you walk by. I know also the cricket-on-the-hearth, who eats up your best clothes when you are camping out; and I know a whitefaced hornet that stung the back of my neck just as I was unlocking the door of a country house I had come far from the city to see. I spasmodically threw my bunch of keys into the air, and they were lost in the grass, and the whole day's excursion was wasted.

It will be seen by this that I should be competent, if occasion required, to write an ample treatise on an important part of the insect kingdom. Such, however, is not my intention; I propose to confine myself here to

my relations with a certain very limited group of insects—and even those in the dried and specimen form—which, with their fair collector and owner, came to exert the profoundest influence upon my character and destiny forever more.

I went down one year, in the beginning of June, to Squamquit to rest, after an illness I had had. At the sole hotel, where there were as yet very few besides myself, the head waiter, a rattle-trap sort of a fellow, assigned me a room in the absence of the landlord, and after I had looked about it a little and seen that it would do, I began to put it to rights for my stay.

I saw, attached to the door, a large card of bugs, apparently of the grasshopper order, neatly labeled. This was not a part of the ordinary hotel furniture, and I took it to be a legacy from some predecessor, who, it having served its purpose, had left it behind him, as others leave behind shells, sea-weeds and the like. I hate all such dust-gathering devices, and so I presently shied some convenient object across the room, as I was unpacking my satchel, and knocked it down, preparatory to its being swept away.

Hardly had I done this when a knock came at the door. The door could not open, in response to my call, owing to this very impediment that had fallen at the foot of it; so I went and opened it myself, and remained by it, holding the large cardboard of mounted bugs which I had picked up.

There stood, somewhat flushing, a fair girl, with an older, chaperonish-looking woman beside her, and the rattle-trap waiter, who at once began a voluble ex-

planation that I did not at first understand. The two ladies, however, and especially the elder, took a hand, offering many polite apologies.

It appeared that the young girl—whose name was Dorothea Hanford—had been the occupant of the room immediately before me, having made a brief sojourn there while the cottage of her aunt, with whom she was now staying, was being put in order; that she had left in it a valued piece of property, and had now returned for it.

This was, of course, the unlucky card of dust-gathering bugs; what must it be but that? She had vacated the room that very morning, and had postponed carrying away the choice treasure only because she would trust it to no other hands than her own.

Her eyes wandered quickly to the incriminating object that I held in my hand during the first instant of this brief interview. The moment I was aware it was that that she wanted, I made a very deep bow, and handed it back to her with the best grace I could command, but I am sure it was not very good.

She scrutinized it, then said in a sort of breathless, biting way, "I will thank you for the *Acrydium Americanum*, if you please."

Dorothea Hanford has denied, several times, since, using severe words or manner, but, as I recollect, that, or thereabouts, was the peremptory style of her remarks. The implication clearly was that I had abstracted the principal specimen, which, I could see, was missing from its place of honor, in the center. The rest, fortunately, remained pretty nearly intact.

"The 'Acryd'—the 'Acryd'"—I stammered. I knew it must be on the floor, and was just stooping to look for it when I heard an ominous crackling under my foot, and my heavy tread had crushed it into a hopeless fragment—which I later on threw out of the window.

Thereupon its owner, with a haughty, resentful glance, and the next moment with a gasp, too, that sounded much like a sob, left me, went away with her aunt and disappeared down the long hotel corridor. Afterwards I doubted as to the sob. Would anybody have been moved to so great emotion for such an object? Weeping was altogether disproportionate to the cause and the kind of young woman.

I learned that Miss Hanford was from Morristown; that she was a recent graduate from college, and was pursuing some entomological studies, under a Professor Gregg—who came down twice a week from New Bedford to direct them—with an idea of offering the result as post-graduate work. She was influenced in this by a friend, one Valeria Wakeville, who was going in for the degree of Ph.D. at a large university.

"Dorothea," I was told, "is a girl who could not bear to settle down to a mere hum-drum existence of dressing, dancing, and paying visits. She must always have some rather positive aim in life, and she has already had quite a number."

Her reason for coming to Squamquit was that it was considered especially favorable for a branch of the Acrydidæ family to which she was devoted. All insects, however rare they may be elsewhere, have their favored

habitat, and Squamquit was set down as uncommonly promising for her particular kind of Acrydidæ.

I learned most of this from two younger girls, who owned a good camera in partnership, and called themselves jocosely, as if they had been a firm of photographers, "Taylor & Smith."

Taylor and Smith were not hard to get acquainted with, partly because I was, for a while, the only man in the hotel, and partly because—though I supposed they were taking me quite on trust—they knew a good deal about me already.

They had heard from a friend who chanced to be writing down to them, that I was Anson J. Bushwick, of Providence, secretary of an important manufacturing enterprise, at Boilerville, and that, having been ill of a nervous fever, I had been directed to try and get into condition again by taking a short period of respite and repose.

They were well posted about Dorothea because they had known her and her family for a long time. They were inclined to poke a little fun at her lofty flights in learning, but they had the admiration for her of younger girls for a very attractive older one.

"You would call her an *earnest* character, then?" I said, referring back to their remark about her scorning a frivolous life.

"Yes, I should say she was an earnest character," replied Mabel Taylor, her cheek dreamily reposed on the top of a golf stick; "shouldn't you, Alice? Not that she always sticks so very long to her ideas, though."

"Why, no; she went in for the fine arts at one time,

and then for music, and then she thought of trying library work, and of being a trained nurse, and of raising mushrooms for market," added Alice Smith. "I suppose you might call her a trifle——"

"No, not fickle, I won't have that. She's a dear, anyway; I've known of her doing lots of sweet things for people; and she has the most delightful taste in dress. She wouldn't have gone in for these deep studies if it hadn't been for a friend of hers, who is writing a thesis on Molec—Molecular Derivations, or something or other."

"And she can be most interesting about those bugs, though you wouldn't think it, and we've made negatives of some of her specimens for her."

"Oh, dear me!" sighed Taylor, "how can she stand that Professor who comes down here?"

"He has a very large nose, and it's sideways; and so is *he*, too; and he wears a dreadful hat," Smith hastened to explain. But I did not feel that the Professor was being greatly damaged as to his scientific acquirements by the judgment of these youthful intelligences.

I told them how I had unwittingly spoiled an important specimen in Miss Hanford's collection, and would be glad to do something to make it up to her.

"I suppose she would like it if I should get her some nice large butterflies?" I suggested.

"Oh, mercy! no," exclaimed Taylor, "she scorns butterflies: they're too elementary and decorative. She only wants her precious Acryd—Acryd—ium America—num."

"Too large for your darling rosebud mouth, my dear," cut in Smith.

Taylor promptly threatened her with her golf stick, and continued, "If she gets more than she needs, she exchanges them with other collectors."

As specimens were so easy to collect and she was getting them in such numbers, and as, furthermore, from what I had heard, the moment might not improbably come very soon when Dorothea would drop the present pursuit entirely, and take up some other she might deem more congenial, I no longer saw the need of such misgiving at what I had done, and I ceased to be troubled in mind.

Thus I felt, till one day I chanced to be on the veranda when she ran out on the lawn, with her net gracefully raised, after a prospective prey. The wide stretch of lawn or field, intervening between her aunt's house and the hotel was a favorite hunting-ground, and she came there often. I had been introduced to her by now. Before the introduction I had been merely used to raising my hat to her, in a far-off, formal way, when we met—a salute she barely acknowledged—for although it does not constitute an intimate acquaintance to destroy a person's chief treasure, it does not leave the parties to it entire strangers either.

"Dorothea is really having a very hard time about her specimens lately," said Smith (or Taylor), sympathetically. "She says she cannot get a single one of the kind that you—that was lost. It's an unusually bad season for them; they all seem to have disappeared."

I was much concerned to hear this. To add to it,

Dorothea now, striking out boldly with her landing-net, missed her aim, tripped over a bunch of hay, and fell down, giving her knee a slight twist, that was to confine her to the house for a couple of days. Her gesture in dashing forward was a particularly spirited, graceful one, as if she were volleying a high tennis ball. I am glad to say that Taylor and Smith put it on record in an excellent snapshot, of which I have kept a copy up to the present time.

"She is devoted to her pursuit with great ardor, and I am not warranted in supposing it will ever grow less," I said, now reversing my previous position. "If it is true that its prizes, instead of being easy to get, are very rare, and if she is going on in her eager quest to the point of breaking her bones, it is clear that it is high time for me to do something. The injury I did her is far greater than I supposed, and I ought to try and put her in as favorable a situation as she was before I met her."

I resolved, unknown to her, to hunt for the *Acrydium Americanum* until I had found one as good as that I had inadvertently demolished.

An objection to this was that I should not know an *Acrydium Americanum* again if I saw it. I even regretted now that I had thrown the crushed fragments out of the window; they might have served me in a vague way as a guide. I found a volume containing a cut of one, in the small local library, but the book was too bulky to take along, and I could not remember how it looked from the picture. Finally I got Taylor and Smith to print me a copy from a plate they had taken

of Dorothea's own, lacking, specimen. With this in my pocket, to pull out for reference from time to time, and having got down from town some proper nets, I set forth.

I had heard that you would do well to start out early in the morning, and also to go out at night, with a lantern, because certain species can be taken when the morning dew is on the grass, or in the dark, which do not fly by day. This was not a very good regimen for a person convalescing from a fever, but I did not hesitate at all on that account.

I took in my nets everything that was going, and then I would sort out the insects that looked the least like anything I had ever seen or heard of before, and send some of those to Miss Dorothea Hanford, by Taylor and Smith. She was graciously pleased to accept them; there was no *Acrydium Americanum* among them, of course, but it appears there were two or three other bugs of some value.

There now ensued a pleasant truce. Mollified to some extent by my evidence of good will, Dorothea treated me with considerable more civility. Taylor & Smith and I would draw her out on her chosen theme. We would sit at her feet and listen to her tell about ants that imitate spiders, and spiders that imitate flowers, and the lion ant that digs a pit in the sand for its prey. She was posted, too, on the pests that destroy the farmer's crops, and could discourse learnedly on the cinch bug, the Hessian fly and the coddling moth.

I used to wonder that one small head—a lovely head, with a great lot of charming hair, of a reddish tone—

could carry all she knew. And while she discoursed she would wear the most bewitching of simple straw hats, and, fresh pink and white striped shirtwaists and trimfitting white duck skirts, as naturally as if she did not know one bug from another. Her figure was much rounder than might have been inferred from her face, which was a trifle long. This was seen to particular advantage at the bathing beach, where she swam quite well; she was what the French call a *fausse maigre*, that is, one who appears to be thin but really is delectably plump.

I thought of going deeply into Entomology, so as to be a congenial companion for her, and I got another large book. But when I found that you had to learn about thirteen principal families, into which the subject is divided, and that more than two hundred thousand species have already been collected, I let this go, and concluded to worry along the best I could without deep learning.

As I never brought in, that is to say I never sent her, an *Acrydium Americanum*, I had some reason to believe that she suspected me of being a rival in the field; for aught she knew, I might be collecting for myself, and even making a great commerce in them on my own account.

At length, far from home, one day, I saw one; it is a large locust-looking thing in the main, and I was sure of it. I had to dash into a bog to begin with, and I came out, muddy and wet, and tattered by the briars—without it. But I stuck to the chase. It led me in a homeward direction. I followed the quarry from stone

to stump and bank to bush. My eye-sight must have grown keener under the stimulus of this new ambition, for I located him repeatedly when he seemed quite lost.

He tantalized me by flying to the top of a tallish tree. I threw myself on the ground to wait for him to come down, but he showed no intention of doing so. My reading told me that in some countries very large butterflies are even got by shooting them, and I wished I might try a shot at him, but with my mediocre marksmanship he would probably have remained quite safe.

Tired of waiting I lengthened out the handle of my net, by tying a long pole to it, and then clambered into the tree after him. It chanced that Taylor and Smith passed by; they were taking a leisurely walk to show the place to Taylor's brother and some other young men who had come down from New Bedford, in a sailboat, to visit them. I shouted to them that I was trying to catch an *Acrydium* for Miss Hanford, thinking it desirable to excuse to them my apparently ridiculous proceedings.

They saw something of my spasmodic casts of the net, but soon they went on by another path, and could not have seen me fall out of the tree, as I presently did, and land in a very brambly bramble bush.

Nor was this, again, the best of exercise for one recuperating from a nervous fever. I was a good deal shaken up at the time, yet no serious harm was done. Indeed when I came to think about my condition generally, I found that I was no longer an invalid; my absorbing interest had already freed me from ailment, and made me strong. Thus I was under a new obliga-

tion to Dorothea, instead of having cleared off the old one, and it behooved me more than ever to be strenuous and efficient in her interest.

I pulled myself together after the jar of the fall, and by that time the insect considerably came down—or else it was another precisely like him that appeared—and went on ahead of me. I stalked him along the fence and hedge of thick bushes bordering the land of a farmer named Groffin. We had heard of Groffin as a disagreeable person who was always chasing people off his domain, for fear they would steal his apples or his huckleberries or his walnuts, as the case might be, and who kept a bull grazing there.

I was glad that my game stayed on the hither side of the fence, for I saw the bull feeding beyond, and though there seemed to me nothing very fierce about him, it is well to give a bull a wide berth, on general principles. At a pair of bars opening through the hedge, however, the *Acrydium* perversely changed his route; took a lively spring, flew over to Groffin's side, and lighted on a dwarf cedar tree.

I fancied he had a distinctly wearied look, as he rested there, and that after an effort or two more he was ready to fall into my hands. I would not abandon my hot pursuit just on the eve of success, and this brought me to reason differently about the bull. I leaned on the bars and looked at him, and he cropped the grass quietly, without paying any attention to me.

"He has probably been maligned," I said to myself. "He does not seem any more dangerous than an ox; the

vicious bull is chiefly an invention of the sensational stories and the comic papers."

With that I climbed briskly over the fence. The insect *might* have been weary, but he saw me coming, summoned force for a new leap, and skipped from the cedar tree to a tall mullein stalk. I approached cautiously, and took a careful aim at him; whereupon he sprang from his perch on the mullein stalk directly at the head of Groffin's bull, alighted between his horns, and there of course defied me.

This was unexpected business and most undesirable, but could I go home empty-handed and acknowledge defeat, with all that it implied? Here was a chance that might not occur again in a lifetime. I thought of the smile that might be brought to irradiate the grave face of Dorothea, and I thought of the tear I had caused to fall; I closed my eyes and struck out enterprisingly with my landing-net at the head of the bull.

I did not then believe, nor do I believe now, that the bull was wickedly disposed and dangerous. But without doubt he was confused by the unusual proceeding, the net got tangled in his horns, he pranced this way and that, trying to shake it off, struck me with his shoulder or his muzzle, or something, and——

Biff! bang! the next instant I was knocked as you might say into the middle of next week.

I was dazed or unconscious but a few moments, and when I came to I saw the face of Mabel Taylor bending over me, while the rest of her walking party were standing around in deep concern. They had come back to take a snap-shot at Groffin's bull, which Taylor and

Smith had for some time intended, and had arrived just in time to include my exploit in the photographic view, and also to help save me from its consequences. The bull was then cavorting far away, with the net dangling from his horns, and its handle whacking his flanks; but farmer Groffin had hove in sight, over the landscape, and was hurrying towards these intruders.

Taylor's brother uttered the note of warning. "One out, all out!" he cried, and, being a lively young fellow, ran and turned a sort of handspring over the bars. However, he came back, and helped over the rest of the party; and we all arrived at the hotel without further incident.

I felt sore in my bones, and was glad to rest quietly on the piazza, reading a book, for the remainder of the day. The last part of the afternoon Dorothea Hanford presented herself before me with my vanished net in her hand, and greeted me with a friendliness I had never before seen in her. "It is indeed worth while," I reflected, though not at all aware of the occasion of it, "to see the change made by a sunny smile upon that charming brow, which was never meant for indifference or disdain."

"I have come to bring you back your net, and to thank you for the great favor you have done me," she said. And what is more, she very cordially offered me her hand upon it.

I did not know what she meant; there was no favor I had done her, as far as I knew. I commenced to mumble the usual commonplaces, that it was not at all worth

mentioning, that she was entirely welcome, I was sure, and so on and so forth.

Now it seemed that the bull in his fright had, by a kind of poetic justice, upset Groffin himself. Then he got into other people's property, and finally out into the highroad, where he was stopped, at a considerable distance from home. My net was picked up near where Miss Hanford lived, and, as she was known to be interested in such things, it was taken to her.

"Taylor and Smith also brought me a copy of the snapshot they took of you, and told me all about it," she said.

I thought she was going to get off some nonsensical gush about my having risked my life on her account, but it proved to be nothing of the kind.

"I am so much obliged to you for the beautiful *Acrydium Americanum*," she went on; "I think it is the finest one I ever saw."

I tried to hide my surprise, thinking it would be better policy to do so, but I did not succeed in the least.

"Do you mean to say that that diabolical insect was still in the net, and that I got him after all?" I cried with a great start of excitement.

"Indeed he was. He was well tangled in the meshes, but I took him out uninjured. He's a beauty, a regular beauty; and as I understood he was for me, I've already taken the liberty of putting him in the place of honor."

"And I've really done something, then, to repair my stupid devastation the day of our first meeting?"

"To tell the truth this is a great deal finer specimen than the old one," she answered most amiably. "That

was smaller and had several imperfections," with a frank little laugh. "I would not have admitted it at the time, but the way to get a good collection is to make everybody think you've got a splendid one already, and then they'll send you in all sorts of rare things freely."

Her science might be very good, but it was also evident that she was *très femme*, and of no too alarming severity.

My task then was at last accomplished, my conscience relieved, and I might now return to much neglected affairs of my own. There were some books I had meant to read, and I had brought down a few coins to look over—for to my mind, if you are going to collect—I don't know whether I have mentioned it before—*coins* are the only thing worth collecting.

The new policy, with severing of these ties, ought to begin as soon as possible, as so much time had already been wasted, and my stay at Squamquit could not last much longer. The sunlight was blazing back at us, reflected from the windows of Falmouth, far across the bay, as it was used to do, as if another sun were setting there, in the east. I remember thinking that there was a certain similitude in that applicable to my own case.

"This is not a real interest that has been occupying me," I meditated, "but only a fictitious, passing one, just as that is not a real sun, but only a reflected one, over there at Falmouth."

But it was not easy to begin the estrangement just then, for Dorothea seemed prompted by a desire to make up to me for the unfortunate opening of our ac-

quaintance, and kept the conversation going so genially and entertainingly that I think I have never had a pleasanter half hour's chat in my life.

Nor did the breaking off of the fixed habit follow readily even after that; I need not moralize on the trite theme of how easy it is to get into certain relations, and how difficult to get out of them.

Occasions of meeting her were more frequent than before. There were several meetings in succession at the bathing hour, when she liked to swim out to the float, like the rest of us, and jump off, and once she laid aside her learned labors for all day, and accompanied us on a sailing party. It was of course no more than civil, too, to go to her house, and see how the *Acrydium Americanum* was placed, in her collection. I felt that I must work up to the required estrangement by degrees.

There were many interesting things about her collection. I recollect a large sheet there was that had all the members of an insect spread out separately, in proper relation to one another, which gave a perfect idea of bug anatomy, and would have been of great value to me if I had known it earlier.

I liked to look at the curious stock of small forceps, and scissors, and needles ground to a knife edge, and German impaling pins she used in her work. She was very dainty in all her apparatus. "I mean to treat myself some day to rosewood trays for my collection," she said.

She allowed me sometimes to sprinkle camphor or oil of sassafras among the trays, for, if you don't look

out, parasites will eat up the contents after all is arranged, and your work will go for nothing. Or I would get some labels and paste them on her bottles, or I would help her lay down an insect in melted wax, ready for dissecting.

Her laboratory was a bright room neatly done off from the cottage veranda, and facing out to sea. One day as we were looking through a large magnifying glass together, at the mandibles of a coddling moth that she was preparing to dissect from the body, the sea breeze, coming in briskly, blew a floating strand of her lovely hair right across my face. It was immediately after this incident that I asked myself, "Why break off this friendship at all? Why not persevere in it to the end?"

I sat quite late, by the open window, in my room, that night. The plash of the water falling rhythmically on the beach was brought to my ears by a mild saline zephyr, and the sky was full of stars, and the dark land was full of the mystic glimmering of fire-flies, which fires, it is said, are only their love signals among themselves, after their way.

"A man nearly twenty-eight years of age," my mus-
ing ran, "may well enough expect to marry sometime. Why not now? I have a family that would rather encourage than object to something of the kind. I have never been indifferent to the charm of the other sex; on the contrary, I have a rather keen eye for it. I see that the element of sympathy has been lacking in my former affairs of the heart. It was my being sorry for her, on account of the injury I had inflicted, that

began this entanglement, from which I no longer wish to escape. I see how right he was who first said, 'Pity is akin to love.' "

Nor was it that contretemps alone that demanded it, she was also an object of sympathy on a much more serious account. According to Taylor and Smith her relations with Professor Gregg were a dangerous cause of anxiety; they claimed that he had secured absolute control over her, and was going to marry her. They pointed as proof to the submissive way she would follow him about and defer to him whenever he came; she would leave the most entertaining company or important occasion (according to them) at his slightest beck and nod.

"It's a regular case of hypnotism," declared Mabel Taylor.

"And his *hat* is just too dreadful," said Alice Smith; "and if he ever comes out with anything new in his dress, it is in the most perfect bad taste. But I suppose Dorothea's ideals are so high that she does not mind any mere externals."

I did not think a scientist ought to be judged by the hat he wore; and I remembered that, if he came often to see Dorothea, it was probably because he was paid for his time. Yet he certainly was uncouth, and most likely was undesirable, and it seemed worth while making a campaign if only to save her from such an entirely inappropriate fate.

When I became thus in earnest, and showed signs of being openly a suitor, the change in me was met by a change in the opposite direction from Dorothea.

I knew well that if I succeeded with her, it must be at the expense of the *Acrydium Americanum*; love and learning are two absorbing passions that can hardly coexist in the same breast. But I owed that desiccated insect no consideration, and I was entirely willing that he should suffer neglect.

One would have said, however, that Dorothea believed there should be no such thing as love-making. So hard was she that I thought of her accusingly as having her heart atrophied by disuse, and of having stuck a pin through me, to add me to her collection. I furthermore accused her of being like one of those spiders, she told us about, that imitate lovely flowers in order to lure their victims to them and devour them. Yet I was fully aware all the time that she was not intentionally a siren; she lured nobody except by the bare fact of existing and being as charming as she could not help being.

She was no longer graciously obliging about letting me sort her labels and range her bottles, and she would no longer let me hold the large magnifying glass for her. She said coldly, about this latter:

"You will notice that it has a movable arm, that holds it steadier than you, and keeps it just where I want it."

Nevertheless I hung about the laboratory on various pretexts. I was endured by her, I fancied, with a sort of sweet tolerance. I mended a lock on the door, and a catch on the closet, and contrived—with ample lingering—to make one of the sliding windows run more smoothly on its track.

I lay all my humiliations and trials, all my proceedings, frankly before you, my reader. I shall presently put to you a question bearing upon the case as I have described it. Dorothea is now in Europe. It has seemed best to submit this full account of everything, before her return, with a view to asking your valued counsel. It is between ourselves, of course, and I am sure no one will indiscreetly bring it to her notice.

A wretched, wretched fortnight went by. A great many more people arrived at Squamquit, and the idyllic quiet that had preceded the opening of the season was at an end.

Professor Gregg himself having come down to spend three or four days, Taylor and Smith darkly declared that the object of this visit was to take Dorothea away. At any rate, partly owing to my contribution, nothing more needed doing for the Acrydidal family of insects now.

I was at the laboratory one of the days when he was there. He would put on a watch-maker's glass, held about his head by a tape, and would glare at me through this at times as with an unreasonable jealousy of my presence. Then he would push it up to the top of his forehead, and, fixed there, it seemed an additional, cyclops, eye, that added still more malevolence to his looks.

As for Dorothea, it was indeed true that she would hang upon his every word, and would follow him about, and fetch and carry for him with the meekness of some hand-maid described in holy writ. I watched her most narrowly at this time, and while trying to make all dis-

passionate allowances for a natural devotion to learning and study, I could not but feel, too, that there was much in the pessimistic views of a sentimental attachment between the Professor and herself, as maintained by Taylor and Smith.

"Well, if such were indeed the case, who was I that I should aim to compete with a great apostle of science?" So I soliloquized, and I felt that in the evolutionary process, under the law of "the survival of the fittest," he was the one who was destined to have Dorothea; he would presently carry her off out of my sight, and I should never see her again.

What was my surprise and pleasure, then, when the morning came that the Professor was to go, and she had apparently refused to accompany him. Taylor and Smith reported that they had heard part of an interview the evening before. They said Dorothea had shown reluctance, had pleaded for a little more time, and promised to join him at another station for research somewhat later. His expression now was clearly disgruntled.

About the only thing to do at Squamquit was to go down to the boat-landing to see the guests arrive and depart. A small group of us went down, accordingly, to see the Professor off, and, "A grand good riddance!" I breathed mentally. When his boat had gone, the idea of a walk, to the country back from the shore, was suggested and favorably received. I had hardly supposed Dorothea would accept, but she did so without demurring. She had a strange dreamy manner that morning, and her eyes wore a far-off, abstracted, look. We

came to a place where one pretty path meandered through a small piece of woods, rather new to us, while another ran around its verge.

"You go that way, and we'll go this way," proposed Taylor and Smith, "and let us see who comes out first to the open pasture beyond."

We found our path so densely hedged in at some places that I had to bend back the branches so Dorothea could pass. We paused a few moments in a clearing, and went on. Though pensive or absent in manner, Dorothea was also at times unusually gracious to me. I basked in this pleasant influence and tried to draw favorable auguries from it. Among other things, she said:

"I understand you are prominent in the movement to establish vacation play-grounds for poor children."

"Oh, only as the treasurer; I take in the money," I replied, modestly disclaiming any credit in that matter, as indeed I was entitled to none.

It was evident that she had inquired concerning me, which was flattering. She condescended to refer to coins, and to look at some I carried about. She conceded that there might be a certain amount of interest in them as an object of collection.

She was speaking with regret of not having more opportunities to see wild life—for it is one thing to study specimens in a museum, and quite another thing where they actually live; and it seemed to me as if her imagination was contemplating ranching, hunting and trapping as among the yet untried occupations she would some time like to undertake; when all at once I heard

a sharp little exclamation from her. Turning round, I saw that her head was caught and held fast by the bushes in a very singular fashion.

"Oh!" she cried, "there was a very good little *papilio polyxenes*. I reached after it, and this twig sprang back and went right through my hair, under my hat. And—and—I can't get away."

She was imprisoned by her beautiful locks like a new, feminine, Absalom.

She made some futile efforts to extricate herself, and then the dangerous task fell to me. I speak advisedly when I say "dangerous." There was a destiny, a fatality about this. The *papilio polyxenes* had betrayed her into an ambushade; the prop of science on which she so proudly leaned had treacherously yielded under her hand.

I would not have planned such a thing—I *could* not, for such a thing could not happen more than once in a million years—but I am only a human being; I do not pretend to be anything more than that. I had to labor at disentangling the loveliest hair in the world; I had to unmesh the strands of those maddening tresses, in which my heart would constantly get involved even worse than my fingers. And I had to do it gently, deliberately, slowly, so that I might not hurt her with awkwardness or undue haste. Meanwhile her face, against the background of thick green foliage, was tilted helplessly upward, and wore at times an aspect of angelic resignation.

To mend the embarrassment of this most unusual

situation, she endeavored to keep up a chatter of small talk of the ordinary sort.

We got on quite well as to the kind of weather it had been, and as to Squamquit contrasted with other summer resorts. At length I ventured to say that I felt very much lost now, and without an occupation, since I was no longer permitted to help her make up her collections.

"And how have you been using the spare time that this gives you?" she inquired demurely yet mockingly.

"In regretting my lost occupation and—in fearing to lose you also."

"Very fine language, very polite indeed," she responded, and at the same time she blushed.

She ought not to have said that, and she ought not to have blushed. My temptation had already been too great, yes, it was overpoweringly great. So think of me what you will for taking such an advantage; I leaned towards her, helplessly pinioned as she was, and kissed her fairly on the mouth. Her lips, taken in complete surprise, were still warm and moving with the conversation issuing forth. The curious fancy seized me that they were all the more tempting for the many long, learned words that had passed through them.

It seems to me, too, that I might not have done it if I had not thought I detected in herself just a faint trace of blenching, as if she had somehow dreaded—or shall I say expected?—that very thing. But can I ever be sure of it?

The next moment the full horror of my action dawned upon me. I cried out in an anguish of con-

trition, "Oh, what have I done? what have I done? Can you ever forgive me?"

"Do hurry and get my head out of this ridiculous position. Taylor and Smith are coming this way," she responded tartly; and I do not think her resentful tone was at all too severe for the circumstances.

After this, and all that has been explained, it might naturally be supposed that our engagement and marriage would follow. Such an inference was justified—and yet again it was not.

We became engaged, certainly, so far as that is concerned. And I can congratulate myself on having succeeded in conquering Dorothea's desire, as a preliminary to marriage, to go on a couple of years more with graduate studies, and also to take diplomas in industrial manual training and in landscape gardening.

But meanwhile, on the other hand, I have to report that I have once been engaged to Mabel Taylor also. That young woman was a most sympathetic listener and counsellor through many painful stages of this affair.

Dorothea is now in Europe, as I have said. She writes me that she has thoroughly completed her study of the customs of monarchical governments, and of the architecture of northern Italy, that no other similar interest looms upon the horizon, and she is coming home.

Such being the case, and the list of possible distracting pursuits for her being about exhausted, and as she continues to say no end of nice things to me in her letters, I will ask you to say—this is the question I

spoke above of desiring to put to you—whether you do not think it probable that the difficulties in the case are now practically over and that Dorothea will marry me at last, perhaps even within a year?

"ALECK," A SORT OF A GHOST STORY

"WELL, here's great luck, sure enough!" exclaimed the young business-man, **"Aleck,"** or Alexander, Swanford, running across his confrère, **"Gil,"** or Gilbert, Gaines, on Broadway, New York.

The two young men grasped hands with a brotherly cordiality. It was evident even from their next few words that there existed between them a long and warm friendship dating from school days and continuing with many interruptions to their intercourse—and especially of late, though both were residents of the Great Metropolis—down to the present time.

"Luck it is, and no mistake!" responded **"Gil"** with equal emphasis.

They had met of a wintry March evening amid the bustling crowd and the cheery gas-light glare of the theatre and restaurant district, a considerable period before this had changed to **"The Great White Way"** of unstinted electricity and modern fame.

"What in the world has become of you?" queried Gilbert. **"Ever since you went over to take charge of that blessed factory in darkest South Brooklyn I never set eyes on you."**

"The same here. It's true it's pretty far away over there, and I have to stay close by so as to be on hand early in the morning. But if a fellow looks for you,

you're always on the jump. I don't know what kind of a salesman you are, but you're a travelling salesman all right. The last I saw of you was the end of your coattails vanishing from the Club just as I came up. I ran after you, but you disappeared in the direction of the Forty-second Street Station, and I suppose you were making for a train."

"I dare say I was. But we must get together again, Aleck; we must make some dates. Hush! I'll let you into a small secret. After this next trip the firm is going to let up on my travelling for a while; they're going to give me a period of shore duty, as it were."

"Do you mean to say you are making for still another train now?" and Aleck's eyes fell upon a small satchel that Gil carried in his hand.

"That is exactly what I am doing. My heavy baggage has already gone on to the station, but I've got to wait around till 11 p. m. There's an unexpected change in the schedule, and my good train to the West does not pull out till then. And that is why I am so uncommonly glad to get hold of you, old man. You've got to come in and dine with me, and help me pass the evening till then."

"I'll do it. And what is more, I'll break an engagement to do it," agreed Aleck. "At least I'll break part of an engagement. I'm due up town for a certain committee meeting about ten, but if I get there a little later, perhaps no great harm will be done. At any rate, if there is, they'll have to stand it. So till then, lead on; I'm yours to command."

They were just in front of the comfortable Phoenix

Restaurant. They entered, were led by the waiter down the pleasant white and cherry interior, in a Colonial style of decoration, to a small table in a corner, and were soon ensconced before a palatable repast.

After the manner of their type of practical business people, of medium education, and no great imaginative leanings, the talk of the two young men ranged in an easy, touch-and-go way over matters of trade, sport, the theatres, politics, and pretty women. It descended once, briefly, however, to a serious topic considerably out of the common. This was apropos of the sudden death of one of their acquaintances, a certain Gregson, who had been a particularly energetic example of the salesman class.

"He was one of the liveliest hustlers the dry-goods district ever knew," commented Gil, meditatively, puffing his cigar. "And so poor old Gregson is under ground! Do you get it, Aleck? Can you realize that lively chap yanked out of the middle of everything and planted away where he couldn't sell a bill of goods to a grasshopper? He couldn't raise a finger or wink an eyelash if he had all the spring and fall customers in creation waiting for him."

"What do you suppose he's doing where he is now?" asked Aleck, reflectively.

"That's it, that's it; there's the rub."

"I guess it isn't meant for us to know too much about it. It's this way: if we actually knew that it was so, or that it wasn't so, wouldn't it pretty much knock out our whole system of living on this earth?"

"If *what* was so or wasn't so?"

"Why, whether we are going on in another world, and in a way may be something like this or better—and how things are there generally. If we had absolute certainty that it was so, wouldn't there be a general slump? Any old thing would do for this world then, and we should pass our time chiefly waiting for the next. If, on the other hand, we knew for a certainty that there was to be no next, why, then, folks would be in despair, and all kinds of deviltry would flourish even more than it does now."

"So the best thing is to keep us guessing," agreed Gil. "It must have been meant to be that way."

So, blowing rings or leisurely clouds of smoke about them, they discussed in a rather crude fashion their problems of "fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute." All at once, however it came about, there was struck out, as no doubt it has often been struck out before, the following idea:

"Come!" proposed Gilbert, "see here! let's you and I agree that whichever of us two dies first shall come back, if in any way he can, and tell the other where he is and what he is doing."

"It's been tried," rejoined Aleck disparagingly. "There's nothing very new about it. I'll wager it has been tried plenty of times, and I've never heard that any good came of it."

"Well, you never heard that any good *didn't* come of it. You are not in the way of knowing everything that has happened; nor am I. One's personal experience is worth more than any quantity of the experiences of others. It can't do any harm if it does no good. So

let us two make a little try to settle this problem of the hereafter."

"Pretty large contract, old chap."

"The matter seems to be left mainly in the hands of long-haired cranks and suchlike folks," pursued the other, warming up in his argument, "and their reports, so far as I have ever heard, are absolutely vague and featureless. Now, if a couple of level-headed, matter-of-fact fellows like us agree on this, and go at it when we arrive on the other side of Jordan, bearing in mind that there is to be no nonsense about it, but everything is to be reported in the most direct and straight-forward form, who knows but we may really accomplish something, or, if not, show that it can't be done."

"I like your idea of having no nonsense about it. Here goes! I'm with you," said Aleck. He extended his hand across the small table to meet that of his friend, and, in high good humor, raising their glasses, they bound thus their dismal compact.

"We must have it down in writing, and each keep a copy," said Gil, and drawing forth his notebook he made a memorandum agreement in semi-legal form. "It is important to refer to this from time to time," said he, "so as to see that the engagement is well kept in mind and not in danger of being forgotten."

"Here's hoping, though, that there'll be no immediate hurry to carry it out," said Aleck, raising his glass and taking a sip from it.

"Aleck Swanford, party of the first part, and Gil Gaines, party of the second part," the impromptu compact began, "do hereby covenant and agree each

with the other as follows, to wit: That whichever of the two, meaning the said Aleck and the said Gil, heretofore named, shall first shuffle off the coil of this mortal life shall, if he finds it in any way possible, appear personally to the survivor on—what date shall we say?—for instance, the next Fourth of July following his decease, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and——”

“Why do you put it the Fourth of July?”

“It's in keeping with the cheerful, natural tone we want the experience to have. Nobody can imagine anything very shivery or grewsome happening during the rattlety bang of a Fourth of July celebration and at that time of day.”

“Cut out the Fourth,” objected Aleck, “and the daylight, too. It's too much against the traditions; it is known they appear, mostly anyway, at night, and we should get all the chances we can in our favor.”

“The ‘traditions’ is just what I'm opposed to,” insisted Gil. “Let it be distinctly understood that we will avoid the usual conventional spook style of appearance. There are to be no ghosts floating round in white sheets in this, no groans nor rattling of chains, no pointing of bony forefingers; no freshman initiation business. See?”

“I see; we won't have any of that sort of stuff, not a bit of it.”

“Of course not. Why, you'll be the same old Aleck, no matter where you are or what the circumstances, and I'll be the same old Gil. There's nothing about either one of us to frighten the other now. Why should there be then?”

"Good!" and "Right you are!" commented Aleck.

"What date do you choose for the reappearance then, if you don't like mine?"

"Why not New Year's Day?" decided his friend promptly. "It's a good likely date, just as easy to remember; and we'll leave it open day or evening."

"New Year's Day it is, then. Down it goes. The defunct party is to appear on the nearest January 1st following his decease." And this further item was added to his memorandum.

"So, then, one of these fine days, or evenings, as it may be," he continued, "you come along, and I see you standing at the foot of my bed——"

"Speak for yourself, Gil: it may be you that comes along."

"Well, then, say I come along. Say one of us, as the case may be, shows up, and stands at the foot of the bed——But, I say, Aleck, old man, *don't* stand by the foot of the bed; be a good, friendly sport and come round to the side of it. Draw up a chair for an easy chat. Get a cigar from the mantelpiece and smoke it if you can; do anything and everything to make yourself at home, and give out a sense of good sociable feeling."

"We'll bear it in mind," agreed Aleck, with an affirmative nod.

"No matter about the harp-twanging and general musical business; let the ethereal exaltation, the ecstatic uplift, and all the usual vague generalities go. We'll put all that down as taken for granted. Let us agree to tell the definite things that one really wants to know.

For example, 'What time do you get up in the morning?' 'What do you have for breakfast?' Sketch out a typical day's program with you. Describe the pattern of the wall-paper on your dining-room."

"What's the matter with asking them about their tennis courts and golf links, if they have any?" put in Aleck. "And about their kitchens and bathrooms, and how their plumbing, if any, compares with ours in this lower sphere?"

"Nothing at all the matter with that; it's exactly in the line of our definite investigation. What we all want is the cold facts, isn't it, Aleck? and we don't care to be put off with misty twaddle. Let's try to pass on to each other, whichever it is, something with a little length, breadth and thickness to it."

"The usual ghost makes me—well, just tired," said Aleck in a tone of nonchalant disgust. "There was one, for instance, that used to take all the windows out of a house down in Ninth Street. People passing by wouldn't see any there, and then in a few minutes they'd see them all back in place again. And there was one that used to pop out of a closet and scare children to death; and there was another one, a gray ghost, that used to be seen going upstairs when a person was coming down, and coming down when he was going up. It would pretend to flatten itself against the wall to make room for them, but just as they were slipping by, it would make a grab for them. Pretty small business for spirits from the other world to be engaged in, eh? Their cussedness and the nonsensical uselessness of the things they do, according to the reports, is what makes

it so hard to believe in them even the least little bit."

They pursued this rather lugubrious topic in the same tone of high good humor that marked the rest of their friendly chat; then dropped it as lightly as it was begun, and it was shortly all but forgotten.

At about ten Aleck arose, buttoned his ulster warmly about his throat, and departed to keep the uptown engagement of which he had spoken. Gilbert pressed a fresh cigar upon him, accompanied him to the storm-door, which let in a fine powdering of snow as it was momentarily opened, and then he returned to his warm corner of the restaurant and sat down over the evening papers to pass the remaining interval till his train time.

But in those very moments when he was walking back from the entrance door and resuming his place, a most distressing catastrophe happened without. In five minutes from the time they had parted Aleck was dead; that good and friendly Aleck, so brimful of health and strength and all the interests of life was suddenly blotted out of existence.

This was the middle period, if it be still remembered, that of cable traction, after the period of horse-cars, but before the trolley had come in. Aleck ran for an uptown cable-car that was passing on the other side of the street, his foot slipped on the ice between the rails, and the life was crushed out of him by a swiftly oncoming downward car as by some monstrous juggernaut.

The features, furthermore, were disfigured beyond recognition, and it so happened that there were no

papers in the pockets that established immediate identification. The body was carried into the drug-store at the nearest corner, an ambulance with clanging bell came up and carried it off to a hospital, a crowd of the curious that momentarily blocked the street melted away, and the great thoroughfare of a thousand interests resumed its normal aspect.

Some two weeks later, and not before, Gilbert Gaines heard of the violent death of his friend. It was through the letter of a New York correspondent of the local paper discoursing of the many casualties attending the reckless traffic in the streets of the metropolis, which letter he read at Minneapolis, that he knew Aleck Swanford was no more.

His first horror was succeeded by a deep depression; and it was unavoidable that the strange compact so lately made should soon return to mind. Aleck had not given him any indication of his fate at the moment, but it was natural to expect that he would do so presently, and he began somewhat nervously to look for it.

"In spite of what we said, Aleck would not confine himself to any fixed time or season," he reflected. "If he is interested in the success of our experiment, the most natural thing for him will be to give some sign at once."

But days, weeks, months, passed, and then the first New Year's Day, as nominated in their contract, much to the trepidation of Gilbert Gaines, approached, and then again the New Year's Day of still another year; and nothing of a disquieting nature appeared, there was no manifestation of any kind.

"Aleck was the best-natured fellow in the world," he would sometimes reflect. "He would do anything in his power to oblige a friend; and the fact that he does not make himself heard from shows either that there is nothing to tell or that he cannot get here to tell it."

So his sorrow and sense of loss abated, and Aleck, as is the way with all things mortal that pass, began to fade from the memory of the living, and take on the vagueness of the long and far departed.

In the winter of the third year thereafter Gilbert found himself travelling in Virginia. The objective of his journey was the Blue Grass region of Kentucky, where—combining with this some few strokes of commercial business—he meant to indulge himself in the luxury of buying a good saddle-horse. It had been thus far a mild, open, season, but when he was at Richmond visiting some of the historic curiosities of the war, the bad weather suddenly began and put an end to his sight-seeing.

Leaving a bluster of rain, sleet, and snow, driven on by violent winds, he took a train in the late afternoon of precisely the last day of the year, and soon ran out of the storm-centre, into a westward country lying very white and peaceful under a bright moonlight.

As he approached the Blue Ridge it clouded up again. The car was uncomfortably cold. Therefore, instead of remaining the night on the train, he concluded to get out and pass it at the first considerable town he should fall in with. The town selected in such-like random fashion proved to be Charlottesville, Va.

The fact that it had an ancient court-house and square of historic interest, and the fine ruddy brick, white-colored buildings of the University of Virginia, justly esteemed as exceptionally charming architecture, bore no part in the making of his choice. He saw nothing of what attractions it might have had till the next day. It simply so happened that he alighted there, and that was all.

It was after ten o'clock of a dark and stormy night. Though it was the eve of the new year, the town, as far as he could observe, was already asleep. The inclement weather had probably driven within doors those who would otherwise have been preparing to mark the occasion with some of the accustomed noisy jubilation. The only passenger in the lumbering omnibus, he was conveyed to the small primitive sort of hotel which was then the best in the place. There again he found himself the only guest, for people do not travel much at that time of the year, but particularly aim, instead, for the winter holidays to be under their own or some other hospitable, friendly roof.

A good-natured, ancient darkey, Uncle Snow, the porter and general factotum of the house, received him at the hotel, and conducted him to his room. There was a balloon-like, old-time, feather-bed, instead of the mattress the modern traveller would have preferred; there stood an old-fashioned clock, with miniature brass columns, under a bell-glass, on the mantelpiece; and there was an air-tight stove, for burning wood, in the room.

The darkey began a bustle towards the stove with the

purpose of making up a fire in it, but Gilbert Gaines checked him. He said the temperature was not uncomfortable, he preferred to sleep in a cool room, anyway, and it was not necessary to have a fire at that time of night. He would prefer to have it made in the morning. Then, by way of having the air of doing something at least for his guest, the old porter straightened a chair or two, tried to draw down a window-shade that would not draw, next, in retiring, dusted a corner of the mantel.

"'Clare to goodness," he commented, "ef somebody ain't ben interferin' with this clock! It's dat gal what takes care o' de rooms, dat's who it is, and ef she don't let it alone she'll hear from me, you better believe."

"Why, what's the matter, Uncle?"

"It's stopped, ain't it? stopped at eight o'clock. I don't know whether it was dis mornin' or to-night."

"You mean to say it goes? I never saw a hotel mantel-clock yet that did. I supposed they were only made just to take up useful room, and gather dust."

"Sho it go; it's one of the greatest goers dat ever was. Dis ain't no common time-keeper; dis is a quality clock! We ain't had it only about two weeks. De boss he brought it in from a big house over Earlyville way, where de folks used to be rich. Dey couldn't keep on bein' rich, and after a whiles all the stuff dey left behind had to be sold out."

"He likes antiques, then, your boss? He collects old furniture?"

"Yas, he colleck most any old thing now, but I guess he'll get ahead 'fore long so he can buy some new—

I see what it is: dat gal's pulled out de wad o' paper I put under de off hind leg to level it up. How kin you expect a clock to go right when it's out o' plumb?"

He was apparently for taking off the bell-glass and beginning new leveling operations at once, but he desisted from this on observing the guest's making some preparations for bed. He went out with a cheery good-night, and the latter bolted the door behind him.

The guest, however, did not feel yet much inclined to sleep. Instead of seeking the repose of his billowy couch of feathers, he wrapped himself in a warm travelling rug, and extracting from his valise an informing volume called "The Horseowner's Guide," bearing upon the object of his jaunt to Kentucky, he read its interesting pages for half an hour.

When finally he did turn in, it proved that he was so tired that he went to sleep at once, and, furthermore, slept with unusual soundness. For during this first heavy slumber there happened things that would ordinarily have kept him very broad awake. There arrived from the plains of the West at a wild pace a blizzard wind, driving all kinds of weather before it. It struck the house with a bang, rocked it well for a while, slammed and rasped the shutters, and even threw down a chimney, and then passed on, leaving a comparative quiet.

Gilbert rested unaware of all this, except as it may have been in the shape of confused noises in his dream. But he was awakened in time by sounds of a different character. The storm was over, the stars were out, and people had come into the streets and were cele-

brating with spasmodic shots and cheers and the snapping of fire-crackers the advent of the new year. He was surprised to find it was only midnight, for arousing from his nap it had seemed much later. He was wakeful now, and while the clamor gradually died away and quiet returned anew, he lay thinking of the plans that lay before him, chiefly his projected visits to the stock-farms of the Blue Grass country. He suddenly became aware that the clock on his mantel was going again; it was mysteriously giving out its regular tick.

"No, it cannot be," he pronounced, recalling the talk his negro porter had so lately devoted to this clock; "the sound must be in some other room."

But it was so near and distinct that he arose to investigate. There were no matches to light his candle; it was characteristic of the housekeeping that such small details should be neglected, but putting his face close to the bell-glass, he could hear the tick loudly, and could see, by a faint starlight, that the hands had gone on by a good hour from the point where he had seen them last.

"Odd enough!" he murmured. "Who or what can have set the confounded thing a-going?"

There was a certain uncanny feeling about it, and this followed him even when he returned to his pillow. He lay there wakeful, thinking of many things. Suddenly he came to a more exact realization that it was the first of January, and the notion entered his mind that the date might have some personal application to him. With a start his thoughts reverted to Aleck, to poor, long-forgotten Aleck. It was not the first New

Year's Day after the death, as contemplated in their agreement, it is true, but it was *a* New Year's Day; and perhaps until now his deceased comrade had not been able to——

The ticking of the clock so mysteriously set in motion went on. "Can Aleck have done it, by way of a hint that he is going to make some manifestation now? that I may expect to hear from him soon?" he speculated. "Come to think of it, he was born somewhere down this way; he was a Southern man, Aleck was, and who knows but from this very vicinity."

But he repulsed this vagrant fancy as absolutely too nonsensical to be entertained, and, resolutely shaking off his uneasiness, took firm command of his nerves, turned over and went to sleep again.

Then more dreams, which it is likely enough had to do with the departed Aleck. He awoke from this second nap, of perhaps an hour, with a strong feeling of mental discomfort, and thereafter lay broadly awake. He was troubled even by the cracking and snapping sounds in the woodwork that are wont to vary the silence of night in old houses. At a given moment there was heard such a decided creak in the floor, followed by a second, that it seemed as if footsteps were coming towards him. The end of a naked tree bough, or perhaps a particle or two of passing hail, flicked against the window like a tapping of fingers; and there was another creak in the floor-board. In an involuntary half-alarm of which he was ashamed the next instant, he called out:

"Is that you, Aleck?"

The sound of his own voice was a corrective for the time being. But he lay thinking, thinking. This sort of reasoning passed through his mind:

"Private and local circumstances may have something to do with their appearance. It may be that they can appear in some localities, and not in others; and if Aleck was from somewhere around here, as I now seem to recollect he was, perhaps he had to let the time go by till now, but when I've come near to where he belongs, he is ready to do something to keep our agreement. And who knows but this clock came from his own house? Earlyville?—Albemarle County? . . . County? it has a pretty familiar sound; I shouldn't wonder at all if it did."

He was bringing himself into a nervous state of credulity. With the ticking of the clock, the clickings and tappings continued, and then his bed was jarred, possibly by one of the intermittent gusts that followed the greater one, or again by one of those small earthquake vibrations that are common enough in the economy of nature and are not heard of, except by the seismograph, until they do harm. It pleased him to fancy that the bed had been pushed by some personal visitant. He spoke again, but this time tried to suppress any sharpness or tremor of tone and to take the air of easy good fellowship that comported with the old-time relations with his friend.

"If it is you, Aleck," he said, "don't mind me. No lugs, you know. I take it that you bear in mind the terms of our agreement at the Phoenix Restaurant."

No answer to this address any more than to the preceding.

"Do you call this a considerate way to act?" he added reproachfully.

If he had doubted the testimony of his ears that he was addressing some real presence, this was now reinforced by such positive testimony of his eyes that he felt he could doubt no longer. At a certain moment the complete darkness of the room grew somewhat illumined. It was clearly not the growing light of dawn, for he could see through his windows that morning was still far away and the faint pattern of the stars was sprinkled on the deep background of the night. A vague brightness came from a sort of nebula on the wall beyond the stove. This nebula wavered, shifted, grew taller and shorter and wider and narrower. Gilbert rose from his pillow, supported himself on his elbow, and with staring eyes endeavored to be incredulous now and reason the appearance down. But it would not down; it was no illusion; it remained, except that it changed its spots, and its tone of coloring. In general, it kept well to the farther sides of the room, where the pattern of the wall-paper could be seen through it, with an occasional leap forward, and it seemed now of a ruddy shade, now yellowish, and again white.

"By Jove!" cried the spectator in his homely, everyday, phraseology, "Aleck, this is not a fair deal. Are you going to try and give me all the stale old phantom tricks? We especially arranged that we wouldn't use them." He had no doubt now that he was addressing

a real apparition, but indignation bade fair to get the better of his natural sense of astonishment and awe.

No answer was returned to this.

"Let me ask you if you kept a copy—I mean if you memorized that agreement. If—if—circumstances have been such that it had grown not quite so clear in your mind, I will restate it for your information."

For the only answer to this, if answer it were, the shade seemed to spring upward, goblin-like, to the ceiling of the room, and, spreading itself out very thin, as it were brooded there; and at the same time the mantel-clock stopped its ticking as weirdly as it had begun.

"I wouldn't act that way towards you, Aleck, for anything in the world; you know I wouldn't." And, trying to hide the dismay in his voice, which arose from the inefficiency of his efforts at some sociable relation, "Of course it's a long time since we have met," apologetically, "and you may have to be rather different. And then again if I could only be certain it was you, Aleck! This sort of thing makes a chap a little nervous at first, but I suppose I could get used to it. And—what?—I did not hear what you said."

But nothing was said. The policy of the phantom was only to hover and waver and flicker, passing faintly from one side wall to the other, but keeping generally well behind the stove.

"All right, then, have it your own way!" exclaimed Gilbert finally. "Maybe you are leading up to something that I shall understand after a while. It would be much pleasanter, of course, if you were like your

old self, but go ahead, anyway! Do it anyway you like."

The phantom grew paler and of slower movement, and haunted now only the remotest corner.

"If you are intending to convey any kind of information, I don't get it at all. I'm sorry to say I do not get the least idea of anything you are driving at."

Upon this the apparition vanished entirely, and returned no more. After waiting some moments for it to reappear, he called out in the vacancy:

"I said you could go on with the program in your own way. Go ahead! I won't interfere any further."

He remained staring into the dark with eager eyes for a considerable time, but nothing came of it. Then, fatigued with the long-continued strain upon his attention, and dreading that he might give way to something like a panic, he sprang out of bed, felt for the betassled bell-cord that hung near it, and gave it a hard pull, meaning to bring the relief of some human company.

The cord was old and frail and broke off at the cornice above, producing no other result than to bring down a little cloud of dust on his head. Then, almost in a real panic, he hurried to the window, whence, if need should arise, he could call for aid to the world outside; there was a relief in that, and there was more tangible relief still in the fact that the pale premonition of morning was at last in the sky. Solaced from the principal stress of his agitation he wrapped his warm travelling rug around him anew, drew a chair to the window, and sat down there and watched the pale

gleam brighten little by little over the snowy landscape to full day.

When the first few human figures appeared upon the scene, beginning their daily rounds, he fell asleep in his chair, and he did not awaken again till the morning was well advanced.

The old darky porter came in due season to take down his luggage for the outgoing train. Glancing about as he swung the valise into an easy portable position, he remarked:

"Well, I 'clar' to goodness, ef de ole clock hain't moved on some in de night. You push on dem hands, did ye? to see if you could start her up?"

"No, I did not lay a finger on it, Uncle. It just started up of its own accord, ran awhile and then stopped."

"Land! you don't say so?" in admiration. "Well, she'll do that sometimes if she gets a shake or a poke. When she stops that way that's how you know the levelin' ain't good. I guess it might ha' ben that blizzard that struck the house 'bout 'leven o'clock that jarred her into goin'. It made things hum here for a few minutes. You wasn't too cold without a fire, was you?"

"No, I got along all right on that score," replied the departing traveller, receiving his first information of the blizzard and adhering to the old porter's theory of its effect with some mental relief.

"Ef you was goin' to be stoppin' with us longer, or if you was to come back another time, I'd see that your fire was good an' ready for you befo'hand," volunteered

the old servant ingratiatingly. "The worst o' this ole stove is that you see she's got a big crack in her that lets out a lot o' smoke when you first makes the fire, and the winders has to be throwed open to get rid of it. It can smoke like ole Lucifer. 'Cause o' that smoke is why I didn't 'vise you very strong 'bout warmin' up last night just before you was goin' to bed."

He touched the stove casually with his vacant hand as he passed towards the door.

"Some little heat in her still; and that's curus, 'cause it's three or four days sence anybody had fire in this room. Must be some o' them ole embers kept burnin'. Well, maybe it helped—didn't let you quite get frozed in the night."

Gilbert Gaines walked over and inspected the old-time air-tight stove. It was in fact faintly warm to the touch, and he recollected distinctly how it had seemed perfectly stone-cold the night before. Towards one end of its elliptical shape was distinctly seen a crack of several inches in length opened through the rusty metal. He threw open the door of the stove and looked in.

A bit of live embers lying upon a bed of gray ashes blinked at him, as if the red eye of some monster in lazy recognition. The solution of his mystery was there; it was clear to him what had produced his seeming apparitions. A remnant of embers, lingering even thus long among the charred sticks, had been fanned into life by the fierce draught in the chimney made by the scourging winds, and, leaping into flame, this brief flame, showing through the crack in the stove, might

easily have produced on the walls of the dark room the phenomenon of flickering and dancing gleams which he had been almost forced to take for goblin shapes. With a very full, genuine sense of relief at last, he repeated to himself several times reflectively, "By Jove, by Jove!" Then, smiling, he said:

"Your stoves and clocks seem to be pretty much self-acting. I guess things about run themselves in this hotel, don't they?"

"Haw, haw! I jess wish they did," laughed the old man in boisterous response. "It would save us a pretty good lot of trouble."

As he was entering again the slow omnibus for the station, it occurred to the traveller to ask, "Ever hear of the name of Swanford around here, Uncle?"

"Why, yes, name o' Swanford. Them was the folks that used to live one time in the quality house where the ole clock came from."

When Gilbert Gaines was again in the train and speeding away westward over the Blue Ridge, and while he regarded without seeing it the passing landscape, he soliloquized in a doubtful way.

"Poor old Aleck! I guess he's tried as hard as he could, but he couldn't make it; he was one of the kind that would do everything possible to keep his word. It doesn't show that there isn't any hereafter, but it shows there isn't any communication open. Aleck was right when he said, that last evening there at the Phoenix Restaurant, that it probably wasn't meant for us to know."

YESSAMINA

Now there were about fourteen of those daughters of Pandeli Zenakis, the prosperous Greek merchant established in Constantinople. All were comely, healthy, with especially pretty figures, and an amiable, innocent sort of charm about them. One a little taller, one a little shorter, one more round and plump, one willowy and slim, perhaps to the extent of showing her shoulder-blades very distinctly when in evening dress, but there was a charm about this too, as if the place was indicated where the wings were going to grow when she was a celestial seraph, instead of a terrestrial one with a refulgent satiny skin, as at present. You would scarcely believe that there could be so many beautiful children turned out to pretty much the same pattern, especially as their father and mother were not good-looking, indeed quite the contrary.

It seemed as if none of them could do anything in quite the ordinary way, I mean about their courtships and marriage and settling in the world. There was a bit of the romantic and the unusual in nearly every case. You may remember my telling something about that of Urania in an earlier time narrative called "Near the Rose,"—and then again you may not. Well she was the one that had such a variegated time in her engagement and final marriage to the young Armenian Crœsus,

Agob Oglou. Then there was *Aspasia*, who married the dashing young American nabob, he having met her when on shore for a brief stay in a tour round the world, and carried her off in short order; and there was *Calypso*, who married the eccentric Russian secretary of legation.

But I can never stop even to indicate the vicissitudes of all of them; so much history all in one family is considerably more than should be offered with an expectation of favorable interest. I am concerned now only with *Yessamina*. *Yessamina* was the fifth in order of these daughters—no, to be strictly accurate, she was the sixth, yes, the sixth.

Now where there are fourteen daughters, some little social gadding about on their part may naturally be expected. *Yessamina* in particular had the habit of running in rather frequently to the pleasant home of *Madame Zampacoulos*, a near neighbor. *Madame Zampacoulos*, English by birth, married to a Greek husband, had lived long in many of the capitals of Europe, and was a good deal of a cosmopolite and an intelligent and entertaining woman. She had a friendly interest in youth, and was to play a very leading part in the heart perturbations and matrimonial fate of *Yessamina*.

It chanced that she had in an album of photographs that lay on a table in her rich and tasteful drawing-room a charming portrait of *Yessamina*, taken in the simple schoolgirl attire she had worn not so very long before the opening of these events, for if *Yessamina* was twenty at this time, it was certainly all she was, and I am more inclined to think it was but eighteen.

There came one day to Madame Zampacoulos' drawing-room, among others, a young man of fortune named Isar. He was a much Europeanized Armenian, and it now appeared that he had been absent from his native city of Constantinople a couple of years, traveling with a view to benefit his enfeebled health. He picked up the album of photographs, and coming to that of Yessamina, uttered a cry of admiration.

"O, my! O, my!" said he, or whatever corresponded to it in his particular dialect of that much dialected country, "who is this beautiful girl?"

His urbane hostess informed him, with as much detail as he required.

"And has she retained all this delightful grace, these charms, in growing up to young womanhood?"

"She has even added to them."

Then he said, like that, upon the instant, "She is the ideal and type that I have cherished in my dreams. I have already fallen in love with her. I feel that if I should meet her, it would be all over with me, and I should make every effort to marry her."

"Could I by any possibility, through you, make her acquaintance?" he went on to demand.

Madame Zampacoulos admitted with a discreet, Monna Lisa sort of smile that there was such a possibility. She had the spirit of a match-maker, Isar was a desirable *parti*, and it would be to the interest of the Zenakis family to bring these two together.

So it was done. A date was appointed, Yessamina happened in, so did Isar, and under the discreet chaperonage of Madame Zampacoulos the preliminaries of a

courtship in due form began. Isar was enraptured beyond measure with her; he declared his anticipations far more than realized. He wanted the whole world to share in his admiration; and in particular he brought with him his intimate friend Miltiades Antoniades to bear witness to her superlative perfections. This proceeding has proved in more than one instance to have dangerous results, and it was not altogether harmless in the case of Miltiades Antoniades, for this young man was of a much more taking appearance than Isar, and although being one of a yet more numerous family than the Zenakis—for there was no “race suicide” amid this prosperous commercial colony of the city—he was not in the marriage market and could compete in no way with the financial advantages of Isar, still he was susceptible to such feminine charm and was fairly gallant. He became the cause of Yessamina’s being rather slower than otherwise in yielding to the suit of Isar. However he was most prudent, refrained from making any active campaign for himself or giving any open cause for jealousy, and it may be said at once that any complications that arose later on on his account were not so much in any fault of his own as in the lively imaginations of others.

On the whole, Yessamina put few difficulties in the way of her suitor. It is true that to Madame Zampacoulos she made a little fun of his insignificant stature, for he was a little man who aimed to atone for this by a great assumption of importance, but such words in the mouths of young girls carry no great import, she was a rather thoughtless and giddy person, it was a roman-

tic thing to have such a lover suing for your hand, and some of her friends even younger than she were already married and she would like to be of them.

There are always persons in every community who are ready to throw difficulties in the way of any matrimonial prospects that promise to go off swimmingly. It was represented to the Zenakis family that the trouble with Isar's health was much more serious than he gave out; the report was, in fact, that he was threatened with nothing less than the dread malady of consumption. Yessamina herself was thoughtless, indifferent, about this as about various other details of her prospective future, no doubt realizing but little what it meant, but her family, with the well-being of their daughter at heart, even though there were so many more of them left for whom husbands would have to be found, squarely refused to let the negotiations go any further with this uncertainty impending.

The enamored Isar raged and swore; wild with disappointment at this setback he protested to the limits of available language that there was no truth in the statement. He called upon his friends to testify in his favor, and many of them obligingly did; even Miltiades Antoniadès stretched a point in that direction. Isar began to do all sorts of "stunts," to perform feats of agility and strength, well in the public notice, to show that there was nothing the matter with him and that he was in prime condition. Particularly, by the exercise of ingenuity and a liberal use of his check-books he was able to induce several reputable physicians to take such a favorable view of his case that they furnished him with

certificates of a convincing character. So far as these learned doctors knew he was likely to live to a green old age that would be the pride of the fair city by the Golden Horn.

Nevertheless this defiant and combative Isar knew himself doomed; he was substantially aware from the opinions of the unprejudiced experts he had consulted in his roving journey abroad that there was no cure for him. There was a certain pathos in his campaign for the hand of Yessamina, while in its true light it was a colossal piece of selfishness. He married her; he deliberately determined to give himself the solace, in his brief sojourn upon this earth of the companionship of this beautiful, vivacious, wholly charming girl.

His illness proceeded slowly, but then took a very sudden turn for the worse. Within a few years after his marriage the poor groom was at death's door. He had loved the pretty Yessamina with an engrossing passion, and now he could not bear the idea of leaving her behind him. It was even said that, apart from the unconscious risks she took in being his close companion, he even purposely endeavored to communicate his mortal disease to her, but this was no doubt exaggeration and libel. It was particularly galling to him to think that she might belong to another after he was gone.

"Promise me," he often urged, "not to marry again."

"You have no faith in my constancy, then?"

"Promise! promise!" he begged.

Yessamina refused to take it seriously. "Such peculiar notions as you have," she said. "It is too comical. The idea has never entered my head."

But on a final day he let fall a still more extraordinary request. It was his last day, but no one knew it, for the disease, after its illusive way, had apparently taken a turn for the better; most of the usual attendants were out of the house, and Yessamina was alone with the patient.

"Promise me at least," he insisted in a weak and plaintive tone, "that you will never marry Miltiades Antoniades."

This speech was a spark of revelation. It showed the dull fire of jealousy, most uncalled-for, Yessamina knew, that had been smouldering in the husband's heart, and it startled into life in the brain of the young wife various far recollections and conclusions which had lain there dormant, if at all. The first step was taken in promoting the very thing that Isar was pathetically anxious to prevent.

The young woman still persisted in taking it lightly. "It is too ridiculous," said she. "Your poor mind must be wandering. If you weren't so ill, I should almost be angry with you for such silly notions. There is time enough for everything; you will probably get well and live a hundred years yet."

But a change in his face presently alarmed her. He was holding her hand and feebly insisting upon her vow, when sudden indications made her feel that his end was near. She had a kind and tender heart, tears streamed over her face, and in such a moment she felt she could deny him nothing.

The promise he exacted was already framed upon

her lips, when he fell back upon his pillow lifeless ; and it remained unspoken.

She ran out screaming for help, and as she did not find it immediately from her own household, some people from the street came in to aid her. By certainly a most strange fatality the foremost among these were Miltiades Antoniades and his father, who happened to be passing the gate of her grounds at the moment.

Now, to say nothing further of the younger man, it happened that the elder Antoniades, a widower, was prodigiously impressed with the appearance and circumstances of Yessamina, the widow of Isar, on the present occasion. More beautiful than ever in her grief, her luxuriant hair tumbling down upon her shoulders, and with her two pretty children, who had run out to join her, clinging to her skirts, left a widow at the age of twenty-four, and in possession of a large fortune, she was a figure to arouse the warmest admiration as well as sympathy.

Dimitri Antoniades, this father, had married young, was bereft of his consort since many years ; despite his numerous children, he was still hale, hearty and well preserved, and he kept up an interest in the activities, and even in many of the vanities, of life, that would have been creditable to a man with far fewer years than he. Dissimulating his feeling till the proper opportunity should appear, he now admitted and declared to himself that he had fallen violently in love with Yessamina and meant to marry her.

There ensued an apparently friendly rivalry between the father and son as to which should do the most for

the charming Yessamina in her distress. Indeed Miltiades yielded the preference to Dimitri in this way with a certain pleasure, glad that his father should come to appreciate from closer acquaintance the merits of the woman he himself so highly appreciated, and about whom he should have to consult him in a matrimonial way.

It is probable that the very prohibition of her lamented Isar, her deceased husband, had put the idea of Miltiades Antoniadès distinctly into Yessamina's mind. He had been till now but a friend of the house, and, owing to Isar's latent jealousy, not at all an intimate one, and there were no tender passages between them. But now Yessamina, involuntarily perhaps, would send in his direction inquiring and favorable glances, and when their eyes met Miltiades allowed himself to be encouraged by what he saw. He was less diffident about his money prospects, his earlier esteem developed into a strong and true affection, and whenever opportunity offered, though there was but little during the year of her mourning, he began to make love to her in all the desired forms.

Yessamina adhered in the most exemplary manner to the customs prescribed by rigid etiquette for the period of her mourning; she saw scarce any visitors at all but the intimate friends of her own family, the friendly and always cheery Madame Zampacoulos, and some few men connected with the settlement of her business affairs—among whom the elder Antoniadès had artfully contrived to have himself included. Indeed it was due to this business connection that his son, whom he inno-

cently sent at times as his agent, was able to see her as often as he did, but he rarely saw her except in the presence of witnesses.

When the period of mourning was over, there began an odd rivalry between the father and son, the former, however, astutely keeping his proceedings to himself. Yessamina resisted the wooing of Miltiades with the memory of Isar; she felt her conscience was forcibly telling her that she must be bound by his expressed wishes. As to Dimitri, she had thought of him only as an old fellow of rather sly ways and a rakish tendency not yet fully outgrown; this was her opinion till he came forth squarely with his astonishing declaration.

"I am but sixty, my last birthday," he would urge. "What is an age like that? The merest trifle. Marry me and I will be robust, active, gay, beyond most of the men you know. And then at the same time," he pursued, "you will have the advantage of my ample steadiness and long experience, of which you will have need in your property interests and to take care of you and your children."

As long as possible his suing was kept from his son by the amiable discretion of Yessamina. She thought it would soon pass over, and she did not wish the two to be embroiled on her account.

In due course Miltiades went to his father with his ardent passion for Yessamina, fully confident of his approval, and asked him to make for him the proposal for her hand, as was customary in their time and their circle.

He was nothing less than astounded at the kind of

reception that he met with, and disgusted beyond measure at the unfavorable opinion of his beloved to which he was obliged to listen from this unexpected source.

"I have made a careful study of that young woman," returned Dimitri with severe gravity, "and I am satisfied that she would never do for you—no, never in the world. No, no, drop it. Let us hear no more of it."

It was from Yessamina herself that he first got an inkling of the true state of things.

"If I cannot marry you," she could not forbear saying to him finally, "how would you like me for a step-mother?"

"A step-mother? a step-mother?" he stammered in amazement.

"I warn you that all you children would have to stand around. I should be very strict with you," she continued roguishly. "You would have to toe the mark."

Upon hearing her revelation he flew to his father in a towering rage.

"So this is what you have done to me?" he cried. "This is the treasonable part you have been playing behind my back? So now listen to my decision: I will receive no further favors nor support at your hands. I shall go out into the world and make my own living."

"Pooh! pooh!" scoffed Dimitri, "what is all this far-rago of nonsense about nothing at all? Did the fair Yessamina say that I paid court to her? Why, there is no end to women's vanity, even to hers. She has distorted into this some trivial joking or gallant compli-

ments of mine. I thought she had a more level head even with all her good looks."

"And you really had no idea of marrying her?"

"Why, come now! at my age! Is it probable? That's a pretty story."

In short he craftily contrived to put such a new complexion upon the matter that the son felt there must have been a mistake somewhere. Perhaps it was after all only a question of the young widow's vanity; women are always to be conceded a certain leeway in that respect, are they not? It is comparatively harmless.

"But in the way of making your own living," pursued Dimitri, "by a happy coincidence I was just about to propose to you a very good affair. Apropos of that, our manager Yusouf, up at the lumber camps at Batoum, has fallen sick, and must be replaced. You can have his position, with the same rate of salary, which is good, as you know. You can work into the duties by degrees; the assistants will help you about that all they can; and if you develop a talent in that direction you can look forward to being established in it as a permanent profitable career."

Batoum was far, but there were frequent vessels, and plenty of mails from Batoum. Miltiades Antoniades, with his suspicions allayed, and yielding in part to a sense of filial duty and yet more to the attraction of gain, which would put him less in the light of a fortune hunter with respect to Yessamina, took the steamer for his father's ancestral forests in far Batoum.

There was in particular a great cutting of railroad ties for the awakening railroad movement of the coun-

try; and near the port the hum and zip of the saw-mills made a cheerful music all day long. The half willing exile used up in ardent missives to Yessamina many an hour that should more properly have been devoted to the acquirement of his new duties.

As to Yessamina, whatever impression he had produced upon her heart still strongly ran counter to her fancied obligation to the deceased Isar. She opened her troubled mind to Madame Zampacoulos on that point.

That good and long-time friend exclaimed, "Any scruples of the kind are perfect nonsense. Isar was the most selfish of men to try and exact such a promise from you. And besides, as you admit, you never made it."

"But I was willing to; I was just on the very point of it," argued the younger woman plaintively, "when—when he died."

"The only point to consider is that—though most unfairly over-persuaded—you did *not* promise, and that should be the end of it."

"Now as to these two men, the father and the son, you should not marry either of them," she would contend.

"Not even Miltiades?" responded Yessamina, startled. "But do you not speak in this way because possibly you have never seen him?"

"You forget that he has been several times at my house. He is a tall, fine-looking fellow, it is true; but what does mere looks amount to in a man? just nothing at all. You should be more ambitious; you are beautiful and rich and you ought to go in now for an exalted

position. I shall have some foreign ambassadors for you."

With his son out of the way, at distant Batoum, the elderly Dimitri undertook the most active of campaigns. He was the most amorous of old-time gallants. What airs of youth he affected! What florid ties and waistcoats he wore! What flowers and varied presents he offered!

Yessamina repulsed him at last with the charge of treachery to his son, in whom she now openly confessed her interest and even her affection.

This was a sharp goad, an unendurable sting. Dimitri, completely overthrown, in his chagrin, went home and took to his bed. It was given out that he was attacked by heart disease; he was in fact positively ill. Bulletins concerning his condition were forwarded to his son at Batoum, and Miltiades, anxious about him, replied with solicitous messages.

While lying thus incapacitated a brilliant idea entered the head of Dimitri. He wrote that he felt as if the pure air of the fragrant pine forests of Batoum would be of benefit to him. Shortly after sending this word he had himself conveyed thither.

He appeared a pitiable object when at last, by easy stages, he arrived at the camp in the great forests. Dissembling to the limit of his ingenuity, he represented to his excellent, dutiful son that he was not long for this world. And then in what seemed his solemn last days he exacted from Miltiades Antoniadès just such a promise as the dying Isar had asked from Yessamina.

"I have not long to live," he complained. "In these last hours there is one thing, in regard to your welfare, that weighs heavily on my mind. There is a comfort and relief that I want you to give me."

"Speak, my father, and if it is possible, it shall be done."

"I want you to agree with me that you will never marry Madam Isar."

The son, in consternation, replied, "But why, my father? In all our talks on this subject you have never given me any sufficient reasons for your opposition."

"I have given you my reasons. I have your happiness greatly at heart, and it is certain that she is not the kind of a person to make you happy. A widow with two children, and a sly, coquettish minx, who——"

But the young man could not listen to any aspersion upon the adored one even from such a person and at such a time. The good son bristled at what was said to him, but then abating his temper, responded sadly,

"I cannot promise what you ask. I could never keep such a promise if—if she should be pleased with me and should show herself willing to have me."

The hypocritical parent groaned and shifted his face to the wall. But he continued, and returned again and again to the charge.

"I will only ask you," he finally said, "to make this agreement for the short remaining period of my life. You see the state I am in, and it cannot be for long. I beg you to try and seem indifferent to her and to take no steps to win her, while you have me still with you. I cannot bear to see what I should consider such a great

disaster for you take place under my own eyes. After I am gone—well, perhaps I shall never know; or perhaps, having duly reflected, you will then be immune from this threatened harm.”

“So much at least I will promise,” consented the young man, full of filial piety, and feeling that he should be stony-hearted indeed not to make some small sacrifice to the author of his days, lying there in that condition.

There came other hesitations, another strong mental tussle, when he found it arranged by Dimitri that the peculiar condition was to be put into writing.

“In writing? in writing? No, why indeed in writing?” and he shrank back in extreme reluctance.

“So that I may be absolutely easy in my mind. Consider it my whim, my mad caprice, if you will. Your word of course is just as good, but there is a satisfaction, a completeness, in this. See now, I may last a few hours or a few days, it can be but a few weeks at most, and the thought would be too harrowing that during this brief time your heart should be elsewhere than with me. Oh, humor me in this, I beg of you.”

“This paper prescribes that I shall lose my inheritance in case I should break the agreement,” worried Miltiades, glancing over a document already prepared that the sick man had instructed him to withdraw from under his pillow. “That is too much; surely there is no need of that.”

“Does it read that way? Does it say that? Ah, yes, but you will see that the date is of some time back. It is a paper that I prepared then in the hope of coercing

you. I have no such vain hope, no such desire now. I was well and strong then, but now—— As the promise is only for my short lifetime, the clause can have no importance; it is a mere form; this paper will serve all purposes well enough.”

So, with his feeble voice and moribund look, he had his way. Miltiades signed, and he even reproached himself as unfeeling that he had hesitated to accede to the poor suffering invalid's last desire.

And now quite a marvellous thing happened. The solace and restful satisfaction were so great in the astute Dimitri's mind that he began to mend. He rapidly grew better, and in a short time, though assuming, till he departed for home, a weak, pathetic demeanor, as of one still ravaged by lingering aches, he was quite out of danger.

Arrived at Constantinople, he still sent back plaintive reports of his health, but he flew on the very instant to renew his siege of the pretty Yessamina.

“Now, indeed, you must marry me,” he said, displaying the paper in triumph.

“What is this? What do you mean?” wonderingly.

“It means that my well-meaning but flighty and of course quite impecunious son, Miltiades, has desired to put down upon paper, for my information, a statement that he is wholly indifferent to you, and does not propose to see you further. ‘During my lifetime,’ he has phrased it, but you may judge from my appearance how long that is likely to be.”

“He has made such a promise?”

“He has indeed, and, for all his erratic ways, he is

a man of honor and will keep it. As you see, he even desired to put down the statement that he was to forfeit all inheritance from me if he broke his agreement. It was his own wish and I let the paper go as he had prepared it, and acceded to his request."

He had supposed from Yessamina's pensive expression of countenance that he was producing a sense of profound conviction. But when, with a fatuous air of his complete success, he now renewed his ardent pressure for her hand, he was repulsed by a manifestation of skepticism and of personal scorn for himself.

"Not if you were the last man in all the universe," she declared indignantly. "I can only look upon you as false, cruel, unnatural. I will ask you now to leave my house and I hope I shall never see or hear of you again."

It was not long before the true state of things, as here set forth, reached the distant Miltiades. Upon receipt of it he paid scant heed to matters at Batoum, as may be imagined; he threw his duties there to the winds, and took the speediest passage possible back to that anguish-breeding Stamboul on its beauteous Golden Horn.

But even now when he rushed into his father's presence in a towering rage to charge him with the base stratagem of his pretended illness, the elder man had remaining art enough to tame his anger, reduce him again to the state of an obedient son and to a certain belief in his good faith. He had prepared himself—just as had Isar, in the opposite sense, in former times—with certificates of physicians making it appear that

he had indeed been suffering from a serious malady, which might end his days in an abrupt way. As to how long he might live no one at present could foresee.

This problematic duration of his father's life was a chance that Miltiades had taken. It was a chance that had gone against him—his conscience pricked him that he could think of it in that way—but he was a man exceptionally scrupulous in the observance of his word, he had given his word and he felt that he must keep it even under all discouraging conditions. He carefully refrained from going near the fair Yessamina. The nearest approach to her presence that he voluntarily made was to the home of Madame Zampacoulos. With this good dame, by nature a sympathetic friend of lovers and a warm well-wisher to both of these, he would talk over his unhappy case by the hour.

"Your father is a wicked, shameless old man," she summed up—Miltiades raised a hand in mute protest—"I know something dreadful must happen to him. It may be much truer than he thinks that he is not going to live a very long time."

The young visitor looked very grave, and was ready for more than mute protest at hearing that he was to expect such a resource for release from his vow.

To Madame Zampacoulos came Yessamina also, though circumstances had prevented it from being with anything like the intimacy of former days.

One day she bewailed her fate to her friend, saying, "Alas! am I not punished in the very respect in which I failed of my duty? If I had not refused the dying request of Isar, I should never have had Miltiades at

all, it is true, but at least I should have suffered innocently; my conscience would have been clear. I feel as if Isar were reaching out a hand from the other world to reproach and punish me."

"Such consciences, such duty, such nonsense of ghosts from another world!" retorted the good Madame Zampacoulos, impatient with them both; "have we not all trouble enough about this without bringing up such a lot of silly scruples?"

Yessamina only sat still and sighed heavily.

"Now, listen to me," proposed Madame Zampacoulos at length; "this unwarranted agreement that Miltiades made with his father can be broken perfectly well. He agrees not to do thus and so under penalty of the forfeiture of his inheritance. But if he is willing to accept that penalty, he has a perfect right to withdraw from the promise. He is still young enough to begin the world anew and to win and wear you in an honorable way."

"Why need he begin the world anew? Have I not far more than fortune enough for us both?" suggested Yessamina timidly.

"Ah, you love him indeed. Such talk does me good to hear, even though I ought to be provoked with you because you left in the lurch all the fine diplomats I had for you, and you have no real ambition."

"I should much prefer a true affection."

These words of hers were accurately reported to Miltiades, and he was greatly charmed and touched by them. Nevertheless he had a strong personal pride

and felt that he could not accept without a sense of humiliation the sweet solution offered.

"No," said he to their pleasant confidante, "the portion coming to me from my father, though not large, is of importance to me. And yet it was not this that counted in the least in inducing me to make the promise I did. I took the engagement purely to relieve the distress of his last moments and I do not see how I can be relieved of it while he lives.—Unless indeed he should free me from it himself, which is scarcely probable," he concluded with a grim smile of fortitude.

Thus things went on at wretched cross-purposes for a while. Madame Zampacoulos fumed that with all the ingenuity with which she considered herself properly credited, and for all the racking of her brains, she could find no way to set matters right.

At length Yessamina came to her one day in particular distress; she wept, and said that Dimitri, disregarding her strict prohibition, had again forced himself into her presence and greatly annoyed her with his suit. She did not want to make a public scandal and now knew not what to do.

"I shall put on my things and go and talk to that old man myself," the good friend declared indignantly. And so it was; no sooner said than done. Her ire and perplexity had reached the limit of extreme endurance and impulsively she made a hasty toilette and sallied forth.

Just as she was on the threshold of her drawing-room Miltiades was announced. This was not of her own planning; there seemed a beneficent fatality about

it, and—well, though some canons of etiquette might be considered damaged by the procedure, for once she left the two forlorn lovers together.

Her absence was but brief. She returned within the hour in joyous spirits. It was she who now waved a paper excitedly in the air, and she called out in a voice of pleasing musical intonation, "Victory! victory!"

The two lovers, drawing swiftly apart, came forward and looked at her in speechless amazement. Then taking breath, they cried in unison, "Oh, what has happened?"

"Well, it was like this: I met him in his own house, and I told him to his face that he was a bad, dishonest, inhuman old man. 'You must stop this persecution of Madam Yessamina and this treachery to your son,' I said, 'or you will have the contempt of every honorable person. I shall see to it that all is known.' "

The harassed pair looked at their doughty champion with wonder. What was coming? What was this leading to?

"He defied me," she went on. "He laughed my expostulations to scorn. 'Ha! ha!' he mocked, 'I shall have the pretty little widow yet; I shall tire her out. Perseverance is what wins them in the end, the beauties; they like it. If you will kindly stand out of my way to let me pass I am going there now.' "

"The monster!" was Yessamina's ejaculation.

"He did in fact pass me hurriedly, to depart, when

his foot slid on one of the rugs of his marble floor, and then—and then——”

“Oh, what? he fell? he was killed?” were two breathless exclamations. “It is that you are going to tell us?”

“He is too tough, both within and without to be much hurt by a little fall like that; yet it was a heavy one. He pitched down the short staircase which there is, as you know, in the vestibule of the Antoniades house. After a moment I saw how it was: only a question of the jar and maybe a broken rib or two. To him I made the most of it. While he lay there inert I began to recite the prayers for the dying over him. I had the servants take him up and lay him on a couch in the salon and while I sent them flying for a doctor and one thing and another I contrived to remain alone with him. I said to him,

“This is a moment of reparation; it was probably ordained of heaven. If there are matters that weigh heavily on your mind, as I know there are, this is your opportunity to confess them, and to right the wrongs you have done or are doing.” When the physician arrived, he proved to be an acquaintance of mine, quite amenable to a liberal tip, and, after he had ascertained that there was nothing serious the matter, he left the patient to me and aided in the furtherance of my quickly planned project.”

“And you succeeded?”

“Succeeded? I should say so. While my obliging doctor kept people away, I almost frightened the patient out of what little life was left in him. I had

him groaning with remorse as well as bruises. He hoped to be forgiven in the next world for all the mischief he had done in this, including particularly his treatment of you two poor dear souls. He drew forth from his breast and handed back to me the paper he had induced our too kind-hearted Miltiades to sign. And, but wait, listen—he added to it a paragraph over his own signature—this was more difficult to accomplish but the doctor and I propped him up and got it done—especially recommending and enjoining upon his beloved son Miltiades Antoniades to marry Yessamina Zenakis, the widow of Isar, and nobody else. My children you are free; embrace each other!”

Miltiades Antoniades, son of Dimitri, and Yessamina Zenakis, comely and blushing sixth daughter of Pandeli, and widow of the late Isar, embraced each other with a hearty good will. Then they turned enthusiastically to their true and tried friend, Madame Zampacoulos, widow of Nicolao Zampacoulos, banker, deceased, and covered her with the most ardent demonstrations of their affection.

THE CRUISE OF A DRIFTED BOAT

I

FAMOUS old Don Quixote, citing the fantastic books of chivalry that had addled his poor, kindly old brain, exclaims:

"You have no one now who, issuing out of a forest and finding on the beach a small skiff, without oars, sail or mast, boldly throws himself into it, and suddenly arriving about one thousand leagues from the place where he embarked, leaps upon the unknown shore and encounters accidents worthy to be recorded on brass."

Now, however the above may have been at the time of good old Don Quixote, there is some one at the present day who has done, as you might say, pretty much that very thing. I can speak with such positiveness on the subject, for I myself, Arthur Bonwell, am the person.

I got into an open boat, without oar, sail or mast. I drifted away with it wherever it would please to go, and I met with adventure worthy, as it seems to me, to be recorded not only on brass but on U. S. gold coin, 22 carats fine. I do not go up to 26 carats, the limit, because, you know, anything so fine as that is too soft to make proper tablets of. I have no objection to

relating it if there may be some small measure of interest in it for you.

I was staying temporarily with some uncongenial relatives (relatives can, and sometimes *will*, be uncongenial, you know); I was waiting for a position I had applied for and was uneasily uncertain about getting, and it was early springtime, that season which is apt to add to the discontent and dreamings of the poetically-minded, and I thought myself somewhat of a poet in those days—and had, in fact, in my pocket a small scheme of verses at which I was working when this adventure began.

It was one of those days in very earliest spring when it is seen that winter will let go its grip. Some shoots of tender grass peered up near the snow; the water ran down the gutters with a mimicry of murmuring brooks; there was a touch of balm in the air, and it was evident that dear, delectable, summer would really come again.

I came to the Shrewsbury River, at the Highlands of Navesink, just there at its mouth, below the castellated twin lights, which send out the last gleam to travellers departing on far ocean voyages from New York, and the first to those returning. There lay in the edge of the water a skiff that had all the air of having drifted away. It bore in rather a faded painting a name "Marcelle." It had no oar, sail nor any other means of propulsion. I stepped into it and with a vigorous push of my foot was off.

Now then, that odd pleasant little river, having but scanty length, tries to atone for it by having a good

deal of breadth. The tide was setting upward, which in this stream is also southward. For the first part of this fantastic voyage nothing particular happened, and for the last part, almost up to its climax, nothing happened either.

There were a few fishing-craft and an early yacht or two afloat. I took the wash of the swift little steamer "Sea Gull" speeding down to Red Bank, but it did me no harm. I watched the summer hotels and villas to the eastward, which struck me with a whimsical resemblance to some mammoth circus procession marching upon their long spit of sand. I was swept around a graceful bend into the western branch of the river. I passed the Neptune Club House lying white like a larger patch of the lingering snow. I looked at the rural wooded slopes which the season would soon rouse to life.

But the voyage grew monotonous. To relieve its tedium I drew out the copy of verses I had in my pocket and renewed my labor upon it. Have you ever been impressed at the sight of the red signal flag, presage of dire disasters, that the Weather Bureau hoists upon the tall buildings in advance of storms? Well, I have, and just then I was trying to see if I could make something of that in a few stanzas—published later in the poet's corner of a Red Bank newspaper—to which I gave the title of "The Storm Flag Up." It began,

"Thou spot of scarlet floating high
Against a gray and angry sky
How sombre is the augury
Thy rippling folds betoken!

Engaged upon this famous effusion, I was now looking up for a rhyme and now looking down for a rhyme. When I came to look round about for an idea or a rhyme, I noticed that my skiff, which had been proceeding now bow on, now stern or sideways on, "any old way," as the saying is, was not going ahead at all; it was just drifting round and round in an eddy, near the shore, with no prospect of getting out of it. Cakes of ice large and small were following me around the eddy in parasite fashion.

But that was not all I noticed. With the same glance I saw that a young woman of comely, high-bred aspect was looking at me with a surprised, haughty sort of interest, from the bank of what seemed a fine estate.

"How were you going to get ashore?" she inquired, dryly, but in a pleasing, musical voice.

"Oh, I—I—was not expecting to stop. I was just—just passing, going on a little down the river," was, I think, my stammering, confused reply.

"Not expecting to stop? Then what were you intending to do with our boat?"

With her boat? So this was her boat? And this (most likely) was "Marcelle"? By one of those odd coincidences, that after all happen so often that they are scarcely odd at all, it had come back quite directly to where it belonged.

So abashed was I at my absurd predicament before this winsome person, and at her unlooked-for address, that, in partly rising to make my most profound bow, I nearly fell overboard. There should, of course, be a

fair maiden at the end of such a high adventure, but did ever Sir Amadis or Sir Bevis present himself before her under such ridiculous circumstances?

She had been sitting on a garden bench, near a spring-house, with a rug under her feet and books and papers in her lap. She rose, came forward, found at the water's edge a small plank, and bending in a way that showed, through a becoming costume, the curves of a charming body, pushed it off to me. I used it as a paddle and brought my skiff to shore.

It appears that it had been brought out to be repainted and had been carried off by the tide two days before, and had been advertised for. She had me take it down to a small landing-place below, and on my return asked me to write my name and address so that the advertised reward could be sent me. I protested stoutly against any reward; it was only too great a pleasure to serve her, and under the circumstances, the idea of compensation was most unwarranted. She rather haughtily insisted, and I could only do as she demanded.

She sat down again with her books and papers by the spring-house. It was an octagon-shaped pavilion with an iron door and an ivy-grown window. I could hear the water of the spring plashing down, as over steps, within. It was the kind of a house where they sometimes keep butter and milk for cooling.

For all her proud comeliness, I thought she had a weary, somewhat sad, air. As she settled back to her work, I saw with a start of new interest what this work was. She had in her lap a drawing-board, and was

designing upon it a vertical sun-dial. Now it so happened that sun-dials were one of my various enthusiasms; and here was at once something to talk about.

"So charming a way of telling the hours and combining ornament with it should never have been allowed to pass out of use," I maintained, "and it is good to see that among certain enlightened people the taste for them is coming back again, with the old-fashioned names and gardens and furniture, and good, comfortable, old architecture. They may even yet be the fashion."

"So I am one of the enlightened people?" she said, her eyes and brows relaxing, and her expression passing from its gravity into a genial smile. "Thanks." With all her dignity she could be simple and natural.

She let me look over her shoulder. She was drawing, for the sun-dial, a wide border with garlands, signs of the Zodiac, cupids, and old Father Time with his scythe and hour-glass. The dial was to be put up on the spring-house. A smooth space of plaster, she explained, was to be prepared on the rough stone wall, and upon this, the shadow-giving rod being first set, she was going to paint the design with her own hands, beginning as soon as fair weather would permit.

She was pleased that I knew something of this pursuit. The fact is that I had made some of these designs myself, and one reason for my wanting to make a fortune—which had still to be made from the very beginning—was so as to have a property large enough for me to set up some of them as I might desire.

So Marcelle—I saw the name, too, scribbled on the

edge of her drawing-board, as draughtsmen scribble when waiting for an inspiration—and I discoursed a little on the attractions of these primitive clocks. We said how the sun himself comes down and frankly works with you, moving the silent shadow over the hour lines; and we spoke of the many ingenious mottoes that point a pensive moral and embellish the designs.

“I’m not sure I’ve got the fad so strongly as you,” she said, “but it helps keep me in occupation. I must have something to do.”

She was laying out the problem of her sun-dial by a difficult method, which would have puzzled me considerably. In the faint hope that such offer might lead to some extension of the acquaintance, I offered to put at her disposal an old book I had picked up, giving a simpler plan, a kind of rule-of-thumb process, which seemed to answer all practical purposes.

She rejected it, saying, “No, thank you. As I have taken up the subject to keep myself busy, why should I want to escape difficulties or shorten the labor?”

Thus there would often come from her reply, not as in complaining, but half forgetfully, a puzzling little note, bordering on the pathetic, of loneliness, of being driven in upon herself for the resources needed to make her life tolerable.

While we talked I studied her looks with an eager admiration. Her eyes and brows were particularly lovely. Her features were not so very regular, but were moulded with distinction. One thing that had flashed upon me in the first quick impression, in the way that such things will—and it was an impression that I

never could or would renew later—was that she seemed older than I. She must have been about twenty-seven, and I was then twenty-three, and looked younger. Thus she was some four years, four adorable years, my elder. This is a detail that, I state frankly, is odious to me. I ignore, I loathe, I repudiate, this slight difference in our ages, and she knows it, but it has suited her humor, on several occasions, calmly and mockingly to recall attention to it if there was any danger of its being forgotten.

That disparity of ages is, I suppose, one of the reasons why she could treat me in the patronizing way. Though to be sure there were reasons enough why she should quite apart from that. How, indeed, could such a type of exquisitely refined feminine charm, far superior to anything I had ever had the good fortune to meet before, have other than a condescending air, with one like me, arriving there a perfect stranger to her, and in my working clothes? Yes, even this latter petty item I had the vanity to regret, for I would have liked to make upon her the best impression possible.

I will speak of another thing, too, I had noted in her appearance, and that was her attire. Especially, when she had stood forth boldly on the bank, against the background of the shrubbery and the snow, every detail of it was impressed upon me, to the point of the most accurate recollection. She wore a dress of dark woolen stuff, into which was interwoven a certain small pattern of red. I make mention of this matter not for its interest in itself—though it seemed to me that she had always, even in her raiment, the touch that wins the eye

of the artist and the poet—but because, at a later time, it came to have an extreme importance.

The sun-dial, as a topic of conversation, was soon ended. There was no longer any excuse for my staying, and there seemed nothing for it but to go away. But it gave me already a kind of pain to think of leaving this charming acquaintance. I lingered.

And then, I know not how it came about, we were soon chatting almost like old friends.

Marcelle inquired with a quizzical smile as to my quixotic voyage in the drifted boat, and what had prompted me to undertake it.

"You are laughing at me," I said.

"No, I am just laughing."

"Well, it was absurd and stupid, and I guess I ought not to mind being mocked at."

"Don't you know it was dangerous? You might have been run down by some vessel and sunk."

"I can swim."

"But, really, what were you going to do with our boat?"

"I don't think I thought of that much. The important thing was what the boat was going to do with me."

I have been told that in those days I had an open, boyish, countenance, and an ingenuous trick of blushing. This may have helped to the kindly hearing she gave me. This tongue of mine was ever ready to run on when it got half a chance, and now it got more than half a chance. She gave me the floor and I took it with a graceless egotism.

"I'm an excellent listener," she said, "and unusually good at keeping close the things that are told me."

She delicately drew me out about my hopes and fears and trials; never was there a more winning, sympathetic way. There came up the subject of my education, in the small college in the West; my start in life by losing at once my small capital; my verses even—and she was good enough to listen to "The Storm Flag Up," as far as it had got; and my present situation. It was bad form, of course, but, secure in the feeling of confidence she inspired, it was a relief to tell her even something of the traits of the Bonwells—the smug, wholly commonplace, well-to-do, highly respectable family of relations with whom I, Arthur Bonwell, was staying—their worship of money, their disapproval of pretty much all my doings and ideals.

"Is it the Bonwell family up towards Atlantic Highlands?" she asked.

"Yes, do you know them?"

"Yes—no, I merely know there used to be such a family up that way some years ago. They had large market-gardens that we saw when driving by."

"Yes, I have been helping about their work while waiting for something to happen."

"So you are discontented with your lot? If a man is discontented with his lot, all he has to do is get another one."

"That is what I am trying to do." And this led to a more detailed account of the hoped-for position on the country paper.

"To be an editor. Oh, that is fine," she declared.

"A reporter, at first, would be much nearer the mark," I had to state.

This treasure of a Marcelle advised a more conciliatory attitude towards my relatives, warned me against too easy discouragement, predicted for me a successful future; she counselled me as a gentle sister might; she was the sweet Egeria of me, a callow, most unimportant, Numa Pompilius. When I came to know, later, of the heavy burden that rested upon her own life, this self-effacing concern in the destiny of another touched me to the heart.

Among other things we talked of in the long, pleasant, chat, were books. At that time books were almost a more vivid interest with me than was actual life; the characters in them were of more importance to me than most of the real persons I knew. I liked to discuss those characters, to try and carry them further, to imagine, as you might of real people, what they might have done if such and such circumstances had been different.

Marcelle entered very appreciatively into this taste. And then we both had in our heads many fine quotations, which we proceeded to exchange in a kind of small literary duel.

"What a lot of books you have read, and all the best ones!" I exclaimed, airing my admiration.

"I have read a good many, and I suppose there are some good ones among them," she rejoined.

Again the small note of sadness, the implied admission that she had done many things not for their inter-

est in themselves but to kill time, to forget, to fill a weary void.

I know not how it was, but she grew less reserved, less gently baffling about herself. My confidence had possibly begot hers. She told me of various of her occupations. She had had animal pets, a formal garden, given herself to music, fine art, courses in correspondence schools, making her own clothing, had built an arbor and a part of the boat house and even a portion of the boat I had brought back to her, in which she sometimes rowed, but not far, on the river.

"A female Admirable Crichton!" I exclaimed with willing praise.

"You do not know how well—or how badly I do them," she replied, repudiating this. "I assure you, there is nothing whatever admirable about me."

Now in all this there was nothing said of her own family or situation, nothing said showing any close association with people or places round about nor with the great metropolis of New York, of which this is a part of the vast tributary district. Furthermore, she either wholly ignored or was ignorant of many principal features and doings of important current interest. She seemed to know less than even I, a complete stranger, did, of the fine seaside villas and hotels beyond the Shrewsbury, though their fireworks must often have flared upon the sky and the strains of their music have come drifting over to her in the summer nights. She remained just a beautiful mystery.

She had been so gracious, had given me so much leeway, I boldly took more.

"Do you know you sometimes puzzle me very much?" I ventured. "You have ways of talking as if you were a hermit."

"You do not know how much of a hermit I am," she responded. Then a grave smile she had faded into a real gravity, and she made a startling statement.

"I have not been off this place for many years."

I paused a moment in my astonishment. Then, "You like it so much? You are so fond of it?" I asked.

She was smiling again, amiably now. "Let us say it is my whim; I am a whimsical person, you know."

Feeling that my surprised air was not very polite, I said, "Oh, with the congenial sort of company I could make a very good attempt at being a hermit myself."

"As to the 'congenial sort of company'——" she began, but paused there. "Just now there is a sort of interregnum," she continued; "otherwise I might not have had the pleasure of this agreeable interview."

"It is indiscreet to ask, but—but—there is no compulsion about this?" I queried, a spirit of championship flaring up in me.

"Oh, dear, no; I stay wholly of my own accord."

"You are not an invalid; that is evident. That is not the reason."

"But I soon shall be," she said briskly, "and you, too, if we loiter here like this much longer." She gave a little shiver, and caught up a substantial, half-military-looking cloak that lay at hand and drew it close around her shoulders. With the decline of the afternoon the traditional cold of the early March day was coming back.

"And you mean to always keep it up? to go nowhere? to see no one?" I argued.

She gave a little defiant whistle, and then asked, "Don't you remember the lines in *Il Penseroso* :—

" 'These pleasures Melancholy give
And I with thee will choose to live.' "

I did, for I sometimes felt that way myself; but I protested stoutly, "It is not the kind of a life for one like you to live."

She caught at this, and asked as with a quick childish curiosity, "For one like me?" she repeated. "How do I seem to you? It is so long since I have heard. What am I like?"

Here my bent towards poetical rhapsody broke forth uncontrolled. "You were born to shine, to adorn the world, and it is nothing less than wicked to hide yourself away from it. It is plain that you have a lovely nature, you have all the talents and accomplishments, you are simply adorable to look at, you——"

She held up a hand in mute protest. "I brought this on myself; I ought not to have asked," she said in smiling confusion. "You talk quite like a young poet, who would come floating down in an open boat. And now I'm afraid it's time you were going home."

I begged that she would let me come again. I argued the possible advantage there might be in her seeing my old sun-dial book, if she would let me bring it. At first she refused with an air of finality, but then, relenting, yielded to my wish. It was agreed that I should come

again there to the river bank a week later. The spot was sheltered and warm, she hoped then to be actually putting up the dial, and at any rate she was in the habit of going forth in all sorts of weather, and she would almost certainly be there.

"Have you any idea who I am?" she asked.

"Not in the least; I only know——"

"There, that will do," checking any possible further compliments. "I inferred as much. Then would you do me a favor?"

"With all my heart."

"Even if it is a rather unusual and whimsical one?"

"Do let me do something to please or serve you," I urged.

"You do not know who I am; then do not try to find out. Promise me even to try *not* to know who I am, for a little while, until—I give you permission."

I promised enthusiastically. This touch of mystery and secret confidence between us gave the affair its final charm.

It was a most peculiar situation, it was hard to believe that it was a part of my own experience, but there it was. I could only account for it on the theory—as later the case proved to be—that, too much weighed down by seclusion, she had broken over a trifle the barriers that for some unknown reason had been set for her. She had taken a brief respite from sadness, had been willing to practice upon me, a chance comer, the brightness of her eyes, the enchantment of her smile, and had allowed herself a momentary taste of the gayety of heart so natural to her age and feminine charm.

We were at this point when a crackling of steps was heard on the snow. Out from among the shadows cast by a line of cedar-trees bordering a path that led up to a distant mansion appeared a stout, elderly man, who came towards us. Marcelle's easy, gentle manner vanished, and was succeeded by a stiff reserve.

"My guardian, Mr. Malbury," she said, presenting me. Then, to him, "This young man has brought back our missing boat. Not having my purse with me, I was taking his name and address, to send the reward."

Jacob Malbury, as I came to know later, was the maternal uncle as well as the guardian of the young woman. He acknowledged my presence with a sort of grunt. There was something in his looks as hard as iron. He had an air of grim, overbearing authority. Here was a certain light already bearing upon the matter of the "congenial companionship" we had mentioned. Without a word he drew forth his pocket-book and doled out a small sum. I would again have positively declined all compensation, but at a mute signal from Marcelle, I awkwardly accepted it.

This ended the conference; I made my bows and took my departure. As I had no means of returning home by the river, I followed the path through the grounds by which Mr. Malbury had come down. I passed a wide expanse of lawn, a formal garden with pergolas and arbors, a fine, high-porticoed, white dwelling, and issued upon the main road. The miles of my homeward tramp passed almost unperceived, though I caught a ride a part of the way. I was already deep in the poem I would make about this perfect divinity. I thought of

her with ecstasy. And this lovely person had actually become an acquaintance, a friend, of mine? This wonderful adventure, enhanced by its air of mystery and romance, had happened to me—to me, Arthur Bonwell, who had been wont to think that nothing of interest could ever happen in his life? O blessed vagary of the drifted boat!

And so I arrived again at the Bonwell market-gardens and the inharmonious society of my relatives, of whom, however, I could not but think a little more leniently now, since they dwelt so near the new divinity and had put me in the way of this wondrous experience.

II

The end of that coming week seemed dreadfully remote; I cannot say that I possessed my soul with anything like patience. My sleep was uneasy, my appetite—well, no, I will not say that it failed, but it notably diminished, especially when my heart would beat in every sort of way, except the normal one.

I lived over again every moment of that day of days. Faint questionings, as to the mystery, would intrude themselves, but I tried to put these away as a form of disloyalty to the delicious Marcelle.

“What form of compulsion can there be?” I would find my vagrant fancy asking. “Is it some kind of hypochondria that keeps her in a self-imposed imprisonment? Can it even be that she is one of those persons

who, perfectly rational on most matters, have some one respect in which they are of unsound mind?"

"Oh, no, oh, no, a thousand times no! We had talked on every possible subject, and no one could have been more calmly wise, more sweetly rational, than Marcelle. Away with every injurious thought, and with every uneasy questioning as to her identity! Did I not promise not to try to find out who she was? Let it be hers to clear up the mystery when she would, or never. I should remain her loyal servitor always.

Such was my state of mind, and the day for the next meeting with her was close at hand, when there stopped at our house a hustling sort of travelling agent. The family kept him to dinner, as they sometimes did with such persons when there was a prospect of hearing the gossip of the neighborhood. His name, he said, was Lemuel Zwink.

He had lived in the West and also way out in "York State," and had held agencies for various other concerns before the present, as he let us know between mouthfuls at the noon-day meal. If I recollect his amusing discourse aright, he had served as an agent for lightning-rods and baking powders, and for the Paragon Family Medicine-chest, and the goods of the North Star Ham Company. But what he had now was the best thing ever, the greatest money-maker and one of the most weighty enterprises of the day. He represented the All America Real-Oil-Portrait Company.

"I travel in advance," said Mr. Zwink, "take the order, get a small photograph of the customer, send it back to the Company, and from this the Company staff

of A-1 artists paint a portrait that can't be equalled for the money—no nor any other way—anywhere in the world.”

“Guaranteed?” inquired my uncle.

“Guaranteed?” I should worry. And that's where the advantage of dealing with a big company comes in. The oil, the paints—all fast colors—each and every article that goes into it is chemically pure, and plenty of 'em. I want you to understand that there's no chromo-lithograph business about it; it's hand-painted, every jot of it. Nothing could go wrong with it, but if there did, you've got the Company behind you. All you've got to do is notify the Company, and they will rush a man around with the painting tools and fix it up in proper order. No trouble at all. We aim to please.”

“I've seen some of their portraits, and they were just as nateral—as nateral,” said another member of the family admiringly, but this was only by way of conversation, as the Bonwells had no intention of ordering any of these masterpieces.

“We've had some of our portraits hung up in a room with those done by the highest priced New York artists, and nobody could tell the difference between 'em—except to say that ours was the best. Why in the middle West and on the Pacific slope, when I was there, they couldn't get 'em fast enough. They were going out by the carloads.”

Furthermore Mr. Zwink had, as a sideline, the Eureka Series of Crossroads Biographies. Here again he explained, “I see the party, get the data for his

biography, and send it on to the accomplished staff of the Company, who write it up in the highest style of historic art. Or if the party wants to furnish the sketch himself, already written, he can, and in that case the charge is two dollars a page less. Gilt-edged copies of the books will be sent to all State and county fairs and other public places. All the matter will be fully before the public, and is going to be the pride of the party's children and grandchildren, and to go on down to future generations."

The Bonwells did not want any of the Agent's portraits or biographies, but they were willing to indicate some other persons who might possibly become customers of his. I must have fallen back into my dreamy mood, for after the first novelty had worn off, the rude humor and loquacity of the hustling agent could not hold me—as indeed what could?—from my strong pre-occupations. Suddenly I caught my breath with a start, at hearing a name.

It was that of Jacob Malbury. He was being suggested as a potential customer.

"Big white house with pillars," they were saying, "about eight miles south of here, on the river. A lot of considerable high hedge around it. Most anybody will show it to you."

It may well be believed that I was all attention now.

"Jacob Malbury! it seems as if I'd heard that name before. Why, of course, I have. I want to know if I've got round where he's living now. Didn't he use to be in York State years back? There was folks of mine that was well acquainted with him."

"He came here from New York State, when his sister-in-law died, to settle up that property on the river, and since then he's made his home there," said my aunt.

"Isn't he a good deal of a hand for managing orphan asylums, reform schools, poor-houses, and that sort of thing?"

"Yes, he is a director in a good many such institutions. I see," turning to her husband, "that he's been elected president of the Benefit Industrial Home again."

"That's him, that's him," exclaimed Zwink, with animation. "Grinds folks down, likes to make life harder for everybody under him, doesn't he?"

"I don't know as I'd want to say that about a man of such standing and—and property," replied my aunt Bonwell with a certain air of offense.

"Well, maybe I'll stop and see him on my way. Maybe I can do some business with him in one of my specialties."

"Not unless he can get them for nothing," spoke out my married cousin, Henrietta Martha, who was home on a short visit, with her two small, freckled boys. "Jacob Malbury is very close, and he talks of being land-poor. He claims that big place is too much for him, and he'd like to sell it and get his money out."

"Then he'd get out what he never put in," said my cousin Imogene. "Folks do say that he hocus-pocussed his sister-in-law out of it when she was a weak invalid and didn't know what she was doing."

"For shame, Imogene, to speak so of one of our leading citizens, such a—a well-to-do person!" again protested Aunt Bonwell.

"I s'pose he's got some children?" queried the agent. "The young folks often like to have the elders get one of my portraits or biographies."

"He hasn't got any children. There's no young folks in the house except a niece that's lived with him since her mother died," said an elderly, unmarried relative, Aunt Jane.

"That Miss Rollins, that—let's see, what's her name? Marcelle Rollins," said my cousin Imogene. "Well, I guess he won't lay out much money to suit her."

I choked over my food; I half rose and sat down again. They were talking thus about Marcelle, my divine Marcelle, and I had promised her to try *not* to find out who she was.

"What's the matter with this Marcelle? Why wouldn't he do something for her?" pursued the agent.

"Oh, she ran away with the hired man once, and of course he didn't like it. Ever since then he keeps her pretty close shut up."

Would not the heavens fall? I was actually listening to this. I—this——

"She was a self-willed piece, always wanting to amuse herself and make expense," I heard them saying. "While her mother was alive she was spoiled, and besides was off to boarding-school most of the time; but when Mr. Malbury came to be her guardian, he put a stop to all that; and then, in one of her high and mighty tantrums, she ran away."

"There's too much education," commented my Aunt Bonwell.

"That's it; there's too much book-learnin'," said my Aunt Jane.

This was a favorite, oft-repeated text with the family.

"I never wanted to be idlin' and *playin'* 'round when I was a young man. Them that won't work mustn't eat," added my uncle.

"Did she marry the hired man?" inquired Mr. Zwink, nonchalantly.

"No, I understand she was caught and brought back before there was a chance," Cousin Imogene informed him.

"Lucky escape for the hired man, I guess," commented my cousin Ethel with a titter.

It seemed as if I should suffocate, as if I should die on the spot. I arose unsteadily, rested a hand on the back of my chair, to collect my senses, and then walked slowly away.

"Well, it may be good *college* manners to get up and go away before other folks has finished eating, but it ain't considered so round here," I could hear my principal aunt critically commenting on this action.

Then I overheard the following from Lemuel Zwink: "From what I've heard tell of Jacob Malbury," said he, "in case of trouble between him and anybody else, I guess I should take the other party's side every time."

Pretty soon after that he put the substantial livery horse with which he was making his travels into the shafts of his buggy, cracked his whip and drove away southward. For the sole ray of comfort he had imparted in the disaster, the wreck of my fond illusions,

I could almost have been capable of ordering one of his real-oil portraits or crossroads biographies myself.

Disaster? wreck of fond illusions? not by any means. I had assisted at a small display of human malevolence, of a common enough kind, a bit of envious slander.

There was no room within me for any injurious thought of Marcelle; the internal evidence alone confuted it; her unusual intelligence and good sense, her refinement and high bearing, the refined character of her beauty, too, all contradicted it in the strongest way. I absolutely repudiated the idea of her having been at fault; whatever she had done she must have been justified in doing.

It is true that there slipped into my mind some maxim of the cynical La Rochefoucauld to the effect that the cleverness of women is more used to support their folly than their prudence, and the like reflections, but these were instantly dismissed. It is true also that there involuntarily resulted a slight lowering of my exalted ideal—Oh, ever so little! A goddess who has run away has necessarily become slightly more human. My admiration was now colored with a certain pity.

In spite of me the identity of my charming new acquaintance stood revealed, but I schooled myself to wear such a manner that she should not be aware of it. I meant that there should be no change in our intercourse. I would await some difference in her own conduct, or some revelation from her if she ever chose to make it.

At the time set for the memorable second interview

all the bleakness of our early spring had come back again. The gale rattled my windows hard all the previous night, and in the course of the day brief flurries of snow came whistling down the wind.

I went to my destination chiefly by land, but when near it, got a boat from a renter of such craft at the foot of a lane, and pulled on the river. On arrival the thwarts of the boat were white with snow, and the oars were heavy with lumps of ice that had frozen upon them.

There on the bank stood Marcelle Rollins, her face rosy with the sting of the sharp wind, and well shielded by her military cloak. She seemed like some fair young commander come forth to make the round of his outposts.

As we walked towards the sheltering lee of the spring-house her manner was easy and cordial. But it was very soon evident that my preparation was in vain: she was reading me like an open book. Fixing her star-like eyes on my face, she said with a painful emphasis:

"You have heard. You have broken your promise."

Dumbfounded, finding it useless to deny, I disclaimed any betrayal. "It was not my fault," I answered. "People began to talk before me, and I could not help hearing. I have not broken my promise. Rather than consciously do that I would have been torn in pieces."

"Oh, then, why did you come?" she exclaimed, in a wailing way. "Why have you come here again?"

"You wrong yourself and you wrong me greatly, if you think I would pay any heed to a bit of idle gossip, and more especially from the source from which it came."

"Oh, but you well-meaning friend, you poor benighted boy, what they told you is true," she exclaimed, and began to writhe her pretty hands together in a despairing way as if all were lost.

"How do you know what they told me?"

She paid no attention to this, but, with the look of a hunted creature, repeated, "Why did you come back? How could I have supposed you would not hear?"

I ventured to take for an instant one of those charming hands to stop their writhing, and I pleaded:

"Listen to me: You are very unhappy, I am unhappy, too, why will you not let me be of some small aid and comfort to you?"

Again she ignored my speech. "I was so tired of being alone," she said, in an explanatory way, and a little calmer. "You came and gave me a moment of congenial relief. I do not know what I expected. I thought our acquaintance might last a little while, before you, too, would know, and come to think ill of me like all the rest."

Pacing the snow before her as I was, I stamped with indignation at this. "Think ill of you?" I exclaimed. "I would not believe anything against you from anybody, not even from yourself."

She brightened perceptibly on hearing this. "That is dear of you," she commented, "but—but it is also unpractical. You must not make up your mind till at least you have heard what I have to say."

I told her how the story had come to me at the Bonwell family's table.

"Oh, yes, they would know; they know about me," she said.

I sought to distract her mind a little from the seriousness of the subject, and amuse her with an account of the hustling agent, Lemuel Zwink, and his high artistic projects.

"I think I saw him here yesterday," she said, smiling faintly.

"He's got a shrewd appeal to human vanity there, especially in the biographies. Any nonentity goes in who has the price. He'll make your guardian immortal forevermore in a Eureka Biography at fifteen dollars a page, and throw in an awful engraving of him besides for ten more."

"I don't think they have met yet, though he was looking for my guardian. He talked a good deal with our new housekeeper."

"He can hardly expect her to buy his gold bricks, can he?"

"It seems she is his half-sister. He did not know she was here. She was the matron of the Benefit Industrial Home, and lost her place, and he did not know just where she was."

"So you have a new housekeeper?"

"And companion," she supplemented. "Well, she seems willing to leave me a good deal to myself. Poor Mrs. Lathwick! she is efficient and inclined to be helpful, and has a crushed, timid manner, which is no doubt due in part to her late experience. Mr. Malbury turned her out of her place, and when she went to him to plead and expostulate, the notion took him to offer her em-

ployment here, at about one-third her former pay. In her discouragement she accepted.

"Why did he turn her out?"

"I am sorry to say he likes to do such things. And then you can see too the economy of it."

So Zwink had been right in his account of Jacob Malbury, and he had additional reason now to know something of his hard and cruel nature.

"But how can he expect any sort of service of her—of your Mrs. Lathwick—under such conditions?"

"It would take a wise mind, indeed, to know *what* he expects, to understand the doings of a person with whom cruelty would often seem an object in itself."

"Is he——?" and I touched a finger, in the significant way that is used, to the side of my head.

"I sometimes wonder if—if—oh, I don't know. I am so often puzzled by his apparent absence of motive. From what I hear as to the charity institutions in which he has authority, he takes a real pleasure in making every one miserable. Can there be such people?"

"I speak thus frankly," she continued after a pensive pause, "because this leads up to the story I must tell you. I must explain everything!"

"No, no, I beg you do not tell me!" I protested. "It will only renew painful impressions for you, and I do not want to know."

Well, the story, as she told it me, was that of the revolt of a high-strung young girl against a guardian, who, after the death of a most indulgent mother, had imposed upon her a life of humiliation and hardship. He had cut her off from her school friends and most

other acquaintance, and finally even arrived at the point of refusing her postage stamps for her letters. She had been driven to the thought of suicide.

"Yes," she said, "there was one day when I sat here by the eddy"—it was the one where my boat had drifted so idly round—"and looked into it longingly. But, oh, I could not; it was so, so bitter, and I was young and full of life and wanted to live."

"I chose another form of death," she pursued after a pause. "I committed social suicide."

A youngish sort of gardener about the place, a rough, blunt, honest fellow, who knew well from his own experience the brutal temper of the master, had observed her trials and sufferings, and had offered her his sympathy and his aid, if there was anything he could do. He sold some of her jewelry for her, as she would not allow him to advance her any money, and, helped by him, she escaped from the place.

"I was going to try and earn my own living," she related. "I did not go to any of my old schoolmates, because I was ashamed to let them know the kind of life I had been living, and besides my funds were not enough for any distant journeys. It was arranged that I was to go with this gardener for a preliminary stay at his mother's. I had seen her here, and knew they were very worthy people. She made her living by having boarders, and there it would be perfectly proper for me to stay until, by advertising or some other way, I got a place."

I dwelt with a reverent attention upon every word she said.

"I suppose you know Ocean Grove, the great camp-meeting place, near here, by the sea. Or perhaps, as you are such a stranger, you do not. It was there. It was Mount Tabor Cottage, in Hermon Way. How well I remember those names, though I never got there."

"You did not get there?"

"No, Jacob Malbury learned of my absence almost immediately and came after us and brought me back. We were just at the station at Ocean Grove. I could, I suppose, have appealed for protection elsewhere, but I—I—just didn't. I came back with him, and came back even willingly. And that was my famous 'Elopement,'" she concluded bitterly.

There was in this a most convincing sincerity. I could not have doubted its truth for a moment, even if I had not been so strongly prepossessed in her favor. A flush of confusion had mantled her face at this ordeal, and before I could proffer a syllable she broke forth:

"Oh, you do not, you can not, believe me. I have no proofs to offer; I have only my unsupported word against what people may say."

"You poor, poor child!" I exclaimed.

Surely then I could take the protecting, the elder, tone. There was no question, in that brief instant at least, of the annoying difference of age between us.

"It was a plucky thing to do," I asserted.

"It was a mad thing to do. I regretted it almost as soon as I started. I knew that I had done an impossible thing. It was all—I do not know how to explain, and I was almost glad to return."

"You were content to take up the old life again? And all these years since——?"

"Yes, but it was not quite the old life again. Unexpectedly I had gained my object; in a way, by my escapade, I had won my freedom. Jacob Malbury was afraid of me; he did not wish any scandal, and he saw what I was capable of. Since then it has been a sort of armed truce. There are no stormy scenes between us. I have no more fear of than respect for him. There is no compulsion. I stay here willingly now. After what happened it seemed better this way than any other, and I am satisfied to live practically alone.

"But it is not a life to live, for one like——"

"Oh, yes, I know—for one like me, with all the graces and perfections; we'll take that for granted," she cut in, her playful mockery always ready to revive. "You have a great taste for contradicting, Mr. Navigator. I have shown you that it is a busy life and perhaps a rather useful one for me."

"But, granting——" I began.

"This is not a prison, because I am free to go if I would; but don't you know how people have learned to like even their prison?—or at least to get a good deal of improvement out of it? You remember Monte Cristo, how at first he raged and despaired, but then grew resigned and learned all sorts of interesting things in his long captivity."

"But Monte Cristo escaped," I cried triumphantly. "Don't forget that he delighted to get out and he enjoyed a long and brilliant career afterwards."

"Yes, mainly in revenging himself upon his enemies, I believe," she commented dryly.

"But granting some of these arguments," I began again, "and getting all the facts in the story, as you tell it, I don't see why you should take it so hard. You are a person of pluck and superior intelligence, why should you have let what happened weigh upon you so heavily?"

"Take it so hard? Not let it weigh?" she echoed, as if puzzled, as if these words of mine were letting in some surprising new light on the subject. "An open disgrace like that. Why—why there was even an account of it in the papers. Here I have no scornful looks to meet, no critics to be faced. There——"

"Listen to me," I declared positively, "if I were your physician, I should call this a wholly morbid state you are in and based upon no sufficient reason. What do you care and why should you care? Don't you know that most people like to say malicious things and attach very little importance to them themselves. If I were your physician I should order you to go out from your hermit-like seclusion at once—And, oh, if I had a fortune to put at your disposal, to help you in some way to do it!" I concluded lamely.

"Declined with thanks," she returned smilingly. "Very nice of you, indeed; once is enough to have gone through that sort of experience, don't you think?—But where should I go?"

"In the first place, very far away from here, abroad, so that amid entirely different scenes you can live a

wholly new life and forget the past and all its annoyance and trouble."

"Yes, to travel," she responded musingly, "it must be one of the greatest of pleasures, and especially in Europe. Yes, I think I should like that."

"Madame the Countess of Monte Cristo, justice will be done you. You will have the esteem of everybody whose opinion is worth while. There is some great happiness still awaiting you, to make up for the past, I prophesy it."

The interview had been long. The time of parting could not be much further delayed. There was a dismaying air of finality about the parting this time. Marcelle decided it was best on all accounts that we should not meet again. She said she should always be interested in me and hoped to hear of my welfare. But she obdurately terminated the acquaintance.

III

This wondrous episode in my life seemed inexorably closed. So great a hold had Marcelle taken upon me that the future looked as cold as the icy river on which I pulled away on the return from my visit. Were it not that matters of business, especially the matter of my finding a situation in the world, began almost at once to move very actively, I should have been in the depths of despair.

The place on the paper down Red Bank way fell through; the editor wrote me apologetically that there

was to be no vacancy after all. Contrary to his expectation when he had encouraged me to wait, it had seemed best to continue in place the actual incumbent.

This blow, however, was soon followed by what I esteemed a brilliant success. Instead of the country paper, I was taken on to the staff of one of the best journals of New York, one of the great metropolitan dailies. My application had been lying there, apparently neglected, for almost a year. It was a modest place, laborious, with the work lasting pretty much all night, but I took it with a grim apathy. I had my foot on the first round of the ladder, and this should lead to fame and fortune—and the opportunity to do something for the destiny of Marcelle, even though she should wish to reject it. Even the Bonwells were impressed with this fine opening and from that time on showed a changed manner.

I lodged far up town, and in the metropolitan way spent hours in the going and coming. I acquired the grave pallor of workers by night and was proud of it. The floors vibrated under my feet from the rumbling presses of Printing House Square, and I tried to fancy that these were sending dynamic currents of high potency into me, to make me strong for the conquest of the world.

And then, in the very midst of that—in the way of a chronicle of eventful happenings—what think you took place? If I gave you a million guesses, you would not hit it. Why, it was no less than this: The editor of the country paper, regretting my disappointment

by him, as it was partly his fault, tried to throw a piece of work in my way. It had been brought into his office, and he had been asked to select somebody to do it, and he selected me.

He said I must see the party interested not later than Thursday. He did not know I was yet placed; his letter went to the Atlantic Highlands, which caused delay, and it was already Thursday when I got it, and well along on Thursday morning.

The work was nothing less than to put in literary shape the memoranda furnished by the magnate, Jacob Malbury, for a history of his valuable life to be comprised in one of Lemuel Zwink's Eureka Series of Cross-roads Biographies.

I threw everything else to the winds, made frantic speed to the docks, and just caught the "Sea Gull," the small white steamboat, plying her regular course down the North Shrewsbury to Red Bank. There was no more winter now; the season of genial weather was well established; there were some commuters on board, already going to their country homes, and the sail down the Bay and along the river is a very pretty and pleasant one.

So I was to write up the life and miracles of Jacob Malbury! Oh, if I could only tell the truth about that egregious tyrant, I would make a biography, indeed. I must do this work, so as to bring me into contact with Marcelle, and I must contrive to spin it out as long as possible.

While I was musing upon these things and we were gliding past the shores, there just about where a city

capitalist had added to his estate by redeeming a large expanse of the sedge land,

Slam! Bang!

We were in collision with the tug "Buster," hurrying the other way, and were brought to a standstill.

We had a big hole stove in forward, but fortunately mostly above the water line. Twenty feet of our guard-rail was torn away; there was a lot of shattered glass, and there were shrieking women and a few wounded. Those who knew something of "First Aid to the Injured," myself among them, for I chanced to have taken a brief course in this subject, came to the front with their resources.

It was on towards dark night before we were out of all this and could land and get away somewhere. I had lost my appointment and there was no help for it. It was too late then to reach Jacob Malbury, and even if it were not it was absolutely necessary for me to be back in town, under penalty of endangering my valued new situation. I telegraphed him and then hurried down there the next day, hoping still to be in time.

And happily I was in time; the job was found to be still open to me. I was just at the front door—how audacious of me it seemed to be there, thus openly, under the high-columned white portico!—when the door opened of itself, and there was Marcelle just coming out. So surprised was she that she somehow tripped in the step downward to the platform, and I had to put out my arms to catch her.

That involuntary embrace, that moment of delightful contact, I shall never forget if I live a thousand

years. Marcelle did not share the agreeable impression; she looked vexed, and said:

"What is the meaning—Isn't this quite bold and—and—imprudent?"

In rapid words I explained the situation to her, made her understand the business on which I had come. This was scarcely done when Mrs. Lathwick appeared, and on my inquiry for Jacob Malbury, she led me to his presence.

Neither then nor at any other time did he show a recollection of having ever seen me before.

His manner was high and pompous, but he seemed to relish the idea of having his affair in the hands of an editor from one of the great New York papers. He produced the notes for his biography, and we soon came to terms—indeed he could have prepared no terms whatever that I would not have accepted. I was to take away the material and to report to him from time to time as the work progressed. He had a certain gift of gab in public, but, for all his bumptious self-conceit, he was not capable of putting two sentences together properly for print.

Encouraged by me to the full, he lingered so long over the said material that it was lunch-time; and I was invited to share the meal.

I sat nearly opposite Marcelle, and drank in her charming, pensive beauty. Though I have dwelt upon the point that she was older than I, yet there always seemed a touch of youthful delicacy about her features. There was something about her that suggested the head of a lovely child set upon the body of a gracious

woman. Little conversation marked the feast. Malbury was self-sufficient and overbearing, Marcelle was indifferent and distraught, and Mrs. Lathwick was timidly retiring.

Thus I was briefly installed as a sort of Literary Secretary to Jacob Malbury. I found a lodging in the town, sacrificed my hours for sleep, and managed to be there a part of almost every day. I spun out my occupation, making all the delays I could. I cast and recast the notes and the language, led on my vain-glorious patron into side issues and endless reminiscences and fooled him to the top of his bent.

It was a fearful and wonderful piece of work I made of these simple annals of complete mediocrity, the non-committal account I forced myself to give of this hard task-master and false philanthropist. I suppose I ought to have been ashamed of doing it, but, after all, my name did not appear in it and I could not conceive of anybody's ever reading the contents of these new Plutarch's Lives, the Eureka Series of Crossroads Biographies.

The hero of my story was born; he was one of various children. Out of school-time he hoed potatoes and carried grain to the mill. It was a time that called for the rearing of men of rugged nature, without, as we might say, effete polish of manners. Wonderful are the ways of Destiny: the boy of fourteen enters the employ of a neighbor who conducts a prosperous grocery-store—Note how "conducts" is many degrees more elegant than simply "keeps." His one gospel was Work; he had no leaning to idle pleasures. This, I

reflected, would have greatly pleased the Bonwells. He was never led astray by emotionalism. Upon such foundations rest future—ahem! rest the future. Call it fate, call it what you will, there is a tide in the affairs of men that, etc. In a few short years he transferred his budding energies to a real estate office, and in the wide opportunities of this extensive field he found his abiding, life-long, congenial work.

Thus or thereabouts ran some of the gems of this eminent narrative. How he went on to sit in the seats of the mighty, it also told, as leading director in a stove-works, a fertilizer company, a savings bank, and then many charitable institutions.

"Upon the permanent invalidism of his sister-in-law, Mrs. Charlotte Rollins," reads one portion of the chronicle, this part supplied verbatim by himself, "being called to this charge, he administered the estate with notable efficiency."

I lingered on this point, and used art in trying to draw from him more ample details on the subject, hoping to find out something that might be of use to Marcelle. But it was in vain, he would not. I inclined to the belief that the malicious tongues were right in his case, and—as after his death it proved to be—he had wrought upon the weakness of his sister-in-law, during her last illness, and sequestered her property to himself.

My insidious plan to be near Marcelle resulted, in fact, in a considerable bettering of our acquaintance. My employer kept me by a very short tether, it is true, but there were happy accidents of meeting; a brief word

with her now and then, in corridor or garden, and even some full and friendly conversations. And apart from this her presence, for me, pervaded the house and all its surroundings. I could hear her piano tinkling in her room up stairs; and once I saw her working at the frescoes of the sun-dial, which had been delayed and was now approaching completion. Mrs. Lathwick, the housekeeper, chaperoned her, and stood by patiently holding her brushes.

All that Marcelle did, all that I saw of her, in this time, but fixed and increased my admiration of her. Fervent words to express it often rose to my lips, but I prudently kept them there. As to persuading her to any change in her way of existence, my influence was absolutely *nil*. The ideal she seemed to have adopted for herself was that of the Eastern nirvana, a state of passive peace; she had set upon her life the seal of a hermit-like seclusion for evermore.

Lemuel Zwink was now often about the place, having a call to be there on his business errand and also on account of his relationship to Mrs. Lathwick. Never abashed in any presence, he conferred his bustling person and his dry jesting freely upon all. He saluted me as "Pard," and inquired after the health of my folks up at the Highlands.

"Say, I'm a good mixer; I'm used to talking to all kinds of people," said he, bestowing on me a bit of his confidence. "Besides the write-up you're doing for the old man, I shouldn't wonder if I got him for one or two of the All Americas—the real-oil portraits, you know. He's close," he threw back over his shoulder with a

wink, "but maybe some of them charity institutions will put up for him."

To Mrs. Lathwick, his half-sister, he directed much bantering eulogy. "I want you to understand," he would say, "that Mrs. Lathwick is the salt of the earth, and she'd make a first-class subject for one of them biographies herself." Whereat a blush would mantle the wan cheek of the good woman and she would return some deprecating reply, or none, to shun the attention turned upon her in this way.

Lemuel Zwick seemed to take rather especial pains to have funny stories and quips and cranks for Marcelle, as if he felt it a kind of duty to cheer her up in her sadness.

"I've brought you the latest," said he. "Ever hear that one about the man that had a crow on his barn, and shot at it and his barn burned down, and he—?" and so forth and so forth.

I don't know but I was grateful to the rough-and-ready Agent for this attitude, and yet there was a small uneasiness too. I wondered if by chance he was presuming on account of the story he had heard at our home? If he was encouraged in an overbold familiarity because she had run away?

On the last day of my visits there, when my work was done—for with my best efforts I could keep it going no longer—I saw them together, in the grounds. I heard Zwick asking as they disappeared through the underwood, "Ever hear that one about 'Why is a church-bell like a politician'?" while she greeted his effort with a rippling laugh.

Now this is trivial to tell, but it gave me a certain disagreeable jar. Was Marcelle one of those that would treat equally well any and all who promised to relieve a little the tedium of her existence? Was I, having served my turn, to be replaced acceptably by this uncouth fellow?

Another thing that gave me a small disagreeable impression, in the first day that followed my leaving Marcelle, again presumably for good, was the thought of that "youngish sort of gardener" of the story of the flight, the so-called elopment.

Who and what was that young gardener? and where was he now? Was he living nearby and was he in the habit of relating the adventure from time to time to any listener who might casually be interested? This thought rankled. Of course, he was still alive. Persons are not given to dropping out of the world for the mere convenience of those to whom their continued existence may not be welcome. Experience of life shows, if anything, that it is quite the other way round.

Ocean Grove and Hermon Way and Mount Tabor Cottage, those names kept running in my head. If the young man's mother had lived there, that was the place to go and get news of him. There was no obstacle in the way of my going there, and, besides, the great camp-meeting summer city by the sea was said to be one of the curious sights of the country, a sight typically American.

The omnibus from the railroad station took me through the midst of it. It was not so ephemerally built as I had supposed. Besides the many streets of

tents, there were many streets of solid construction. In the tents were little tables with lamps, and partitions of cretonne, and men in shirt-sleeves and women in curl-papers. And there were shops of oriental goods, and piers, and a little lake with boats on it, and wide stretches of sand dark with bathers. And there was a temple and a tabernacle and a great auditorium, open on all sides to the greenery of a grove; and the air was vibrant with a dull hum of melody and sonorous preaching.

I found Hermon Way and I found Mount Tabor Cottage under the same management though the years had passed. The landlady was out, but a slim young maiden, in a check gingham frock, put herself at my service, and then two or three more maidens of the same sort came in. It seems they were nieces from an inland town, who were doing the work of the house in turn to enjoy the advantages of a vacation at this lively resort.

I inquired as to the terms of board. There was but one room vacant, they said, and that was meant to accommodate four, which for one, might make it rather expensive. I saw this room designed for four. It was up in a peak of the roof, as hot as Tophet, with only two beds for the four, and two small bureaus, the varnish of which stuck to the hand, and it was about the dimensions of a good-sized dry-goods box.

"Poor Marcelle," I said within myself, "if she had come here!"

Fortunately nothing could be done about my taking this room or table-board or anything, without my see-

ing the landlady, and I said I would come back in the evening.

I spent the interval looking about among the characteristic sights of the town. I soon ran across an acquaintance, who was a quite likely enough person to be there—*viz.*, my married cousin Henrietta Martha. She was showing her freckled boys the large model of Jerusalem in the pavilion.

Then presently I ran across another one who did not seem to me at all a likely person to be there, this was Jacob Malbury. And his occupation was quite peculiar: he was firing at the clay pipes in a small shooting gallery—and was now and then hitting one. With a quick, keen glance he caught my eye, and put down the light rifle he had been using, and accompanied me.

“I feel safer that way,” he commented briefly.

“Safer?” Did he think he was in some sort of danger, then? I did not know what he meant. But he said no more; he dropped that subject, and broke out in such exaggerated eulogy of my biography of him that it almost made even my hardened conscience wince.

“Why?” he declared, “it’s one of the greatest things that ever was written. It’s an immortal work. I think of getting ten thousand extra copies of it struck off in pamphlet form, and sending it all over the country.”

I was astonished at this fire and fury. He seemed to me very erratic. He was puffy under the eyes and wheezed unusually in talking.

"Now I want to show you something else," he added. He took me by the arm and led me to an annex of the auditorium, and stopped before a framed portrait of a popular preacher of the day, who was to have some part in the service here. It was very glib, shiny and chromo like; it was a specimen triumph of the work of Lemuel Zwink's high art, all American, real oil portrait company.

"I've presented it to them," said he, "and they're mighty pleased to get it. Great work, isn't it? What would you think of my getting a thousand of 'em of myself? Zwink would give a big discount on an order of that size. I would be willing to send one to every Sunday school in the country that wanted it. I'm getting old and I might as well do a little good with my money."

Mentally I was raising my forefinger to my temple again at this strange talk; for was it not the very "mania of grandeurs" he was indulging in? And what had become of his ruling passion of parsimony? But this streak of conduct passed over; he was lucid again and showed no other than his usual manner, that of the hard-headed man of business and of the world.

In my wanderings about I saw him again, near the door, at one of the meetings for special awakenings, at which I glanced in. The revivalist, treating fervidly of death, was saying:—

"Some that are at these meetings this year will not be here the next year. Their friends will ask for them but they will have passed to the great beyond. It may be you, brother, it may be you, sister; it may be

myself; they will ask for us but we will not be here." Then for the greater emphasis and effect he used some real names, as he caught sight of faces that he knew. "Why, it may be you, Thomas G. Barker. It may be you, Jacob Malbury."

Marcelle's guardian and my late patron did not seem at all pleased at this. He came out mopping his brow.

"It ain't so," he disclaimed nervously, "that don't hit me at all; there's nothing in it. Why, I've never felt better in my life than in the last six months. Well, good-bye to you! I've got to catch my train to Red Bank."

When I went back to Mount Tabor Cottage, the landlady had not yet returned. But that was no longer necessary. I remained to supper and was now received by the young maidens in gingham quite as an old friend. "Are you a married gentleman?" asked one of them, and I could see that my answer in the negative increased my good standing at least with the ingenuous questioner.

I had the opportunity for ample discourse with these nieces of the proprietress. They were well conversant with her affairs. They said she had one daughter who was the wife of a caretaker at the auditorium, and also one son.

"How about the son?" I inquired, in as lightly casual a tone as I could assume.

"Why, he's out West," was the answer. "Sent back for a girl he was engaged to here, and married her, and she died and he married a widow who has a ranch, and they say he's done very well."

"I shouldn't think his mother would like to have him so far away from home?"

"She doesn't, and she talks of selling out here and going out to join him. He wants her to. The way it was, he used to work for Jacob Malbury, up to Red Bank, and when there was the big time up there about the niece running away, he was blamed for it some way, and lost his place—things he wasn't to blame for at all—and he couldn't get another. So it seemed best for him to go West, and it certainly was, for he's made a success of it all right."

"They are great hands for moving away about as far as they can get," the narrator continued. "I shouldn't be surprised if, by this time, he had gone to the Klondike."

My young hostesses could not know at all why my secret feeling was so grateful to them, and why I bade them so cordial a farewell—holding out a delusive hope that I might come back at some future time to board with them.

IV

The news of the various marriages of the young gardener and his excessive remoteness gave me a sense of satisfaction, a feeling of involuntary elation that buoyed me up for a long time.

"Is it not something Marcelle would like to know about, too?" I asked myself.

My fancy was always hovering around her. In every intermission of my duties my thought went straight

back to her. My employers in the great newspaper approved of me; my pay was raised and I began to accumulate a capital. I passed my days tackling my work with an energy quite herculean, in the view that I was thus somehow rising nearer to her own level; and in the intervals dreaming and writing of verse to Marcelle. Things going so well with me, I indulged one day in the mental effrontery of some such reflection as the following:

"It would be no brilliant fate at all for Marcelle to marry me, but after all might it not be better than the gloomy exile from every bright thing in life to which she has devoted herself?"

"Faint heart never won fair lady," was also a motto that appealed much to my fancy at this time.

A very considerable period had now elapsed without my having sight or sound of Marcelle. Without any purpose in view definite enough to be formulated, only in a general spirit of observation and of longing, I determined to permit myself, uninvited, the solace of a new visit to her neighborhood, hoping that some happy accident might give me at least a glimpse of her.

Considering my relations with Jacob Malbury, there was no objection now to my going directly to the house, but it seemed more romantic to land by skiff, as on the earlier visits, at the former trysting-place; and so I did.

There was a midsummer peace upon the spot; the only sounds were an occasional soft rustle of the foliage, a gurgle of the eddy, and the long rattle of the locusts presaging another day of heat on the morrow. The

decorative sun-dial was long since completed, a charming monument of the skill and taste of Marcelle, and the shadow of the rod was swinging gravely around it, under the motto: "*I go and return, but thou one day shalt go and return no more forever.*"

I have only a confused recollection even now of the extraordinary event that almost immediately followed my arrival. I heard voices approaching. Though I had wanted and hoped to see Marcelle, it was Marcelle alone; I did not care to fall in with a group of others. The door of the springhouse stood ajar; I stepped within and nearly closed it, to wait till they should have passed by, and to take my chances later.

But they did not pass by; they remained there. I drew the door close together and it clicked. Some sort of controversy seemed to begin; the voices were high, I thought even angry, though I could not hear what they said. I brushed away a part of the ancient cobwebs from a kind of loophole window in the masonry, and looked out.

My view was at a trying angle, but I distinguished the figures of two men, Lemuel Zwink and Jacob Malbury. The third figure was a woman, and I could see nothing of that one except a bit of her skirt and the border of the jacket, but the costume was Marcelle's, the one with the interwoven pattern of red in it, that she had worn on the day of our first romantic acquaintance. So it was Marcelle.

Yes, they were quarreling. Zwink was addressing strong language to Malbury, and his face, as well as the latter's, was angry and flushed. How unlike the genial,

comic, agent. Malbury had a walking stick and once even raised it at the other in a menacing way. The skirt and jacket were always hovering, as with a nervous movement, just on the edge of my line of vision.

What an odd trio was this! What a strange combination was that of Marcelle and Zwick! The damaging query flashed across my mind for an instant: had they two united their grievances (he for his half-sister, the ill-used housekeeper, and she for herself) and were they trying to force Jacob Malbury to some sort of a reparation?

They drifted off out of my field of view. I was just trying to brush away a little more of the grime from the window, when I heard a shot, then another.

There were a heavy exclamation from a man and the half-suppressed scream of a woman, and then footsteps hurrying away. Then followed some sounds of stertorous breathing and the apparent pitching forward and falling of a body just at the foot of the wall.

The door was not really locked, but it embarrassed me greatly to open it. I tore at the rusty catch and cross-bar for many minutes before I could get out. When I did so I saw that the one who had fallen in the affray, if affray it was, was Malbury; the other two had vanished.

There lay the body of Jacob Malbury, collapsed in an awkward heap by the wall. The random forecast of the preacher at Ocean Grove had indeed come true. There lay the lifeless bulk of Jacob Malbury, beneath the frescoed garlands, cupids, signs of the zodiac, and

Father Time, of the sun-dial, and its motto which read:—

"I go and return, but thou one day shalt go and return no more forever."

The hideous, hideous situation! I had assisted at an assassination, and the criminals were apparently Lemuel Zwink and Marcelle. The infamous conjecture forced itself upon me that she had allied herself with him, mayhap even exerted her personal charm upon him, to gain his strong hand to do this baleful thing for which she felt her own too weak. Jacob Malbury had with reason, then, deemed himself in some sort of physical danger.

Who could say that it might not even have been the jesting reference to Monte Cristo's revenging himself on his enemies that had wrought this destruction? Goaded perhaps by some new wrong or an overpowering sense of the old one, she had gone to demand justice, and the result had been this.

Poor, enrapturing, ill-fated, lost, Marcelle! poor utterly lost Marcelle! It was absolutely incredible, but there lay Jacob Malbury gone to his last account, and the others had fled. It could not be incumbent upon me to disclose this thing, upon *me* to denounce Marcelle. It must all fatally come out; justice must be done, but it could not be through me. Oh, no, never that! not that! As if I myself had been the criminal, I was on the point of fleeing from the spot like another Cain.

Yet an instinct of humanity momentarily held me back. My small knowledge of First Aid to the Injured asserted itself here. Though he did not stir, was he

really dead? I made a hasty, feverish, examination. Shots had been fired, but I saw no bullet holes, yet the bleeding from these, of course, might have been internal. At any rate he was dead.

I had moved toward my boat when there came hurrying an irruption of people, and I hastily made a semblance of moving the other way. They were armed constables, servants of both sexes from the house, men picked up at random elsewhere, and also a couple of druggists and a doctor. In the leadership, though proceeding with a cautious tread, were Lemuel Zwink and Mar——

No, not Marcelle at all, not in the least—but Mrs. Lathwick, the housekeeper. Chief proof of the absolute innocence of my accused, she was dressed in the hovering costume I had seen from my loophole, a costume that had descended to her, as one of many small favors, from the wardrobe of Marcelle.

Oh, false-seeming circumstantial evidence, what errors are done in thy name! It appeared later that Marcelle had not even been on the place that afternoon, but for the first time in months had driven into the town for some shopping.

Zwink was astounded to find Jacob Malbury fallen and deceased. Accounting for the belligerent look of the company with him, he said:—

“He seemed to go out of his head, when we were talking to him, and fired at both of us. We hurried away to bring assistance and secure him.”

There were no wounds on the body of Malbury, and the doctor pronounced that he had died of a stroke of

apoplexy. A constable picked up a revolver that was identified as the property of Malbury, and two chambers of it were found discharged. Lemuel Zwick had been searching meanwhile, and with a skilled eye had found places where the bullets fired at him and Mrs. Lathwick had chipped off the stone of the spring-house.

"The safest place is sometimes nearest the target," said he, turning his jests to the last.

Later on, before the Coroner, he admitted that in the interview with Malbury he was "crowding him pretty hard" about his dismissal of Mrs. Lathwick from her position as matron of the *Benefit Industrial Home*.

"If you want to hear the exact facts," said he, "he turned her out of her good place, without any fault of hers, and it was up to him either to put her back again or make it good to her some other way. I was tired of his windy talk about giving me an extra big order for portraits and biographies, and told him so."

"You talked up pretty strong to him, did you, and probably irritated him some?" questioned the Coroner.

"Yes, I did, and probably the excitement killed him. All of a sudden he went wild, pulled out his pistol and began to shoot. Then after we'd run away he dropped. I didn't know anything about his heart disease, if he had any, but it looks now as if he'd been 'nutty'—off the hooks—for some time, and he'd ought to be attended to before."

In fine this was the general opinion of Jacob Malbury that he was deranged. Many instances taken to indicate it were gathered up in the community; and now,

with this view prevalent, Marcelle was re-established in the public esteem, freed from considerable prejudice even on the part of the most scandalous tongues. They said she had only done what might have been expected, and that her life with the tyrant had probably been a real martyrdom.

This then was the secret that had caused all Marcelle's years to pass in the sombre shade, and had caused endless misery besides. A brain awry had gone over the verge of sense and reason into a realm of causeless delight in torture and suffering, and Marcelle had been the victim of this caprice.

Upon what accidents, often much less than this, often of the very slightest, does our destiny depend! How has it been in your own case? How has it been in mine? Why, if my family had only taken the pains to tell me in my childhood some few elementary matters about hygiene, for instance, I should have been an absolutely different person; I should have mastered the world by this time.

Upon which digression, let me say that, as for me, my recreant laments of "Poor lost Marcelle!" were now replaced by pæans of "Glorious Marcelle! Sweet, adorable, pensive, long-suffering, yes, glorious, Marcelle!" But what can you think of me, I ask you, a person who loved her to distraction—as I did—who would lay down his life for her, and yet could open his mind to such petty touches of jealousy, even such a wild suspicion as I have described?

I scarce dared to raise my eyes to hers after this. I was so utterly abashed at the thoughts I had enter-

tained that I felt I could never forgive myself. She does not know, of course; and I beg all of you on no account ever to mention it. My theory is that, with a nature like mine, the best remedy must be to have her forever with me, so that nothing adverse could ever intervene, to have for my very own, this radiant delight of my dreams.

Marcelle was free now to live her own life, to indemnify herself for the past. She inherited a modest property, her mother's that came back to her, and, as next of kin, that of Jacob Malbury also. While I rejoiced at this comparative affluence, I secretly repined at it too. Alack! and woe is me! if she had been left poor and dependent, should I not have had a better ground for confidence in the daring hopes I cherish?

Oh, the pleasure of our free, above-board, friendly intercourse now! I was able to be of some use to her in the settlement of her affairs. And we had not a few pleasant jaunts together, both in the country round about and also in the great city.

This kind of thing could not go on forever; at least it did not. One day I jeopardized my whole standing with her by giving free course to the fervid words that had long burned in my heart and on my lips. I addressed myself to her as to an idol upon a pedestal. I lavished upon her every moving appeal, every affectionate term, that my adoration could furnish.

Marcelle received my declaration with a surprise that I at first thought affected, but which was actual and real. And yet how could it have been, when the ardor

of my feeling had been of such long duration? What had become of the vaunted intuition of women? Is it not said that they always *know*, and have no need of interpretation?

She merely laughed at me. Her words of gentle derision came through the portal of a mouth much sweeter than any conventional Cupid's bow, and through two rows of the nicest white teeth that ever were seen. She chose to treat me simply as a valued young friend, a nice enough, rather forward boy.

"You cannot marry your grandmother," she said.

Now there was a nice, consoling, expression, was it not? Not marry my grandmother, and she, of course, was my grandmother? Again and always the fatal taunt, the hopeless bar sinister, of my youth. I raved and tore against it. I demonstrated that my manner was old, that my greater experience of the world made me to all intents and purposes much older than she, and that I was well able to take care of her.

This remained without noticeable effect.

"If you would only listen to me," I appealed, "I——"

"I *am* listening to you," she replied sweetly; and indeed she was. And I remembered her of old as one who had that high charm in conversation, to hear what was said to her, to *bien écouter et bien répondre*.

I spread out before her numerous instances I had collected, perhaps for my own reassurance and possibly for this very purpose, where the wife was older than the husband.

I cited Lady this and Lady that, many high literary

celebrities and others. "In England especially," I argued, "it is considered very 'swell'; it is 'the thing,' and the best and most desirable thing to do. In some of the cases there is a difference of age of as much as fifteen years or more. And yet you must always be twitting me with the couple of years or so between us."

"Three years, eight and a half months," she set me right remorselessly.

"If you put it on the ground of means—of my not having a fortune——" I began again.

"I do not put it on that ground. I—I cannot think of any such things at all. I am so weary of all that is past. The world is wide. I must follow your own advice, and get away among new scenes and associations, and see something of it, and forget and be forgotten."

It so happened that a friend of her earlier times, who had married and was resident in France, was in America on a visit, and fell in again with Marcelle. She had made, it was esteemed, one of the few successful, important international marriages.

These two renewed a pleasant intimacy, and the friend, anxious to have some one of the old familiar set in her distant home with her for a while, urged Marcelle to accompany her to Europe. It was an exceptional opportunity, and Marcelle wisely accepted it. She used the wings of her freedom. She gave me just the warmest, frankest clasp of the hand, and the dearest, friendly words, and sailed away across the great ocean.

It was the wise, the beneficial, thing to do, and I myself had counselled it, but, oh, the bitter heartbreak that was mine, in the great vacuum of all earthly interests that followed her departure.

I pass over it, and over most of the interval of upwards of two years that now has elapsed.

There have been letters, reams in their contents on my part, but much less on Marcelle's. She wrote me enough to let me know of her home life in the novel foreign surroundings, and later of her principal journeyings in Europe. The friend's house was a château, like a smaller edition of Blois or Fontainebleau. The friend was a Lady Bountiful in the district, had revived, for the benefit of the peasants, an old industry of lace-making, and the like. In the season, they went up to Paris.

The letters fell off, became rarer, then for considerable periods stopped entirely. Once, rather early after her departure, she mailed me a clipping with a sonnet of mine that had happened to get quoted in one of the papers in England. She had scribbled on the margin of it.

"Proud to know this poet. His grandmother expects him to grow up and be a credit to her."

Writhing and twisting of spirit in me, the recipient of the fling, and stamping on the office floor in a way that competed with the vibration of the printing presses below!

Marcelle found favor in the foreign social gatherings; the good society took her up, as well it might. Mention of her beauty and her toilettes was made by the corre-

spondents, in their customary way, and it also pleased them to add to the size of her fortune. After a while they had her engaged; she, too, was to make a noted international marriage.

It was to a general, still young to have attained that rank, and with a title of nobility of the fine romantic sort, such as you find in the pages of history. This was not remarkable; it was the kind of a husband she ought to have; it was only in keeping; she was suited to fill any station.

I did not rage at Marcelle nor at any thing earthly. I only raged at destiny, and not very much at that. What is the use? What is to be will be, and what has been must have been.

Well, nothing in all this; she was not engaged to the general; she had only been mildly interested in him. Her hostess had made some efforts to bring them together, at the château, that was all. And besides, presently the general was thrown from his horse, in some military manœuvres, and killed.

In all this my worldly affairs, my position and my financial situation have flourished, as you might say, like the green bay tree. It is really remarkable how everything has gone well, except that the old adage will haunt me ominously: "Unlucky in love, lucky at play."

In this time too I flatter myself I have acquired a somewhat aged look. What with the night-work and these anxieties, my face has a certain drawn and careworn aspect—which may be useful to me in the future. And you will smile, of course, at introducing so small a detail, but my moustache, which was uncommonly slow

at starting, has really—has quite—but there, there — I will only say its progress seems somewhat due to a preparation named Call's Capillary Coaxer, mentioned to me by Lemuel Zwink as one of his "side lines."

You have now heard the story of the voyage of my drifted boat, as far as it has gone. If you find a not wholly uncheerful note as I bring this account to a close, and remarking that I have even not been averse to telling it with a touch of levity, I will tell you the reason why; it is this:

There have been expressions in Marcelle's letters of late that have made my pulses bound. You might not agree with me about them, and I don't think I can explain them very clearly myself; they are often just mere nothings.

But, for example, now, she has shown a fatigue with Europe, she has spoken of a difficulty in adapting herself with any sense of permanence to her foreign surroundings, has spoken of a homesick longing for America, as she and I had known it.

In the very latest letter she described a beautiful representation of the opera of Carmen she had been seeing. She sings very well herself, and in the matter of music knows what she is talking about.

"A certain pretty air from it keeps running in my head," she said. "I'm humming it now even while I write:

Si tu m' aimais, là-bas, là-bas tu me suivrais."

That, being interpreted, means, "If you loved me you would follow me where I am."

What did I do when I got that letter? I made my business arrangements at the office. I have never seen Europe, and they were ready enough to give me a roving commission, if I wanted it, to see how it would strike fresh new eyes. Then I went and took my passage by a fast steamer.

That blessed land of Europe has been one of my cherished ideals. And there is the divine Marcelle in the midst of it. I am going to see them both at the same time. There is also a convention of writers of sonnets to be held in London, and I shall try and include that in my program.

You don't know, and I don't know, what—if anything—Marcelle really meant by the expression I have quoted above. It may have some important bearing, or it may not. But this I do know, that either I shall marry Marcelle or I shall never marry at all. That is absolute and irrevocable.

There are, and always will be, other pretty women in the world, and being in a way a poet as I am, I trust I shall never fail to appreciate all goodly sights that the great Creator has provided, but I cannot conceive that any other woman should draw and win and enthrall me as Marcelle has. That is one of my tests; that is the way I know my love is the true and genuine. Happen what may, I would rather have the friendship of Marcelle—in such measure as she may choose to give it to me—than the total affection of any or all other women in the universe.

THE END.

